UNDERSTANDING ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

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Foreword

I am very thankful to Allah (SWT), Whose help and favour enabled me to complete the translation of this book. *Fundamentals of Islamic Civilization* (*Islami Tahzib Aur Us Ke Usul Wa Mabadi*) is one of the great works of Sayyid Maududi (Allah's blessings be upon him). No doubt, he was one of the topmost scholars of the Islamic world, and his books, which present the Islamic concept of all aspects of life, spiritual, moral, social, political, and economic, are scholarly works. However, his principal distinction is as the leader of the Movement of the Islamic Revival; for which he established a party with the name of Jamat-e-Islami. The Movement initiated by him has spread all over the world; many organizations are working under different names for the same movement. His scholarly works, including his great commentary of the Holy Qur'an (*Tafhimul Qur'an*) and the organization of the Islamic Revival Movement, and the literature he produced for the Movement, confirm his scholarship. His struggle as the leader of the Movement rightly ranks him high in the galaxy of Mujaddedin-e-Islam especially in the subcontinent of Asia, they include Syed Ahmed Serhindi known as Mujadid Alaf Sani, Shah Waliullah Dehlvi, and Syed Ahmed Shaheed (Allah's blessing be upon them).

Maulana Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi is not among us today but his literature has kept his mission alive, and it is still spreading all over the world. In the Western countries, his books, translated into English and other European languages, are particularly effective means of Dawah work (spreading the message of Islam). His book *Deeniyat* has been translated, and titled *Towards Understanding Islam*, in all the important and widely spoken languages of Asia, Africa, and Western countries. He wrote many books on Islamic beliefs, Islamic ways of worship, and on the Islamic way of life that hold equal appeal to people from laymen to intelligentsia, students to

scholars, men and women. His sermons, delivered in a mosque of a village of India (before his migration to Pakistan) in which he explained in simple Urdu (a language widely spoken in the subcontinent), the beliefs and all the ways of worship in Islam. This book has also been translated in all the widely spoken languages of the subcontinent, and in English too. The book, *Islamic Civilization,* belongs to the same series but it deals with the subject of Islamic belief or faith in a different way, proving its truth, through logic and strong arguments that appeal to the mind and the heart. To explain each aspect of the Islamic beliefs, he quoted the related verses of the Qur'an. The beliefs of other faiths also have been discussed appropriately in their context. This book with two other books, *Diiniyat* (*Towards Understanding Islam*), and *Khutbat* (*Let Us Be Muslim*) makes a good assortment of tools for Dawah work.

I had no predilection for the translation. But one day my respected brother in Islam, Shamim Siddiqui, member of the general assembly (MGA) of ICNA and In charge of Dawah Dept. suggested and encouraged me to undertake translation of this book; I started it and I could not stop until it was finished. I think it was because the matter of the book was of great importance and interest to me. I remember I read this book when I was young, and it was published in a series in Maulana's monthly magazine, *Tarjumanul Qur'an,* from Hyderabad Deccan, and it was reproduced in other magazines too. I remember one of them was *Siratal Mustaqim* of Hyderabad Deccan. In this way I developed an intellectual and spiritual attachment to this book. I pray to Allah (SWT) to give brother Siddiqui the best reward for his good suggestion.

I am also grateful to my sister-in-Islam Aysha Holden, the Associate Editor of *Muslims,* New York, who spared her precious time for improving the language in the context of an American version. Her suggestions in the editing of the book were very valuable.

It will be unfair if I fail to thank my wife, my sons, Shahid and Mushahid Farooqi, and my granddaughters, Marium Hussaini and Umamah Hussaini, who helped me in so many

ways, especially in the typing and the computer work of the book. Without their help it would have been impossible for me to finish the work in just a few months.

I would like to draw the attention of the people with enabling states and resources to the translation of the books from other languages into English, especially Movement- and Dawah-oriented literature produced in Arabic, Urdu, and Persian by great scholars, particularly the books written by Sayyid Maududi (Allah's blessings be on him).

Lastly, I would like to write a few lines about the translation. I have tried my best to convey the sense of the writer as it is, truly and honestly, making the language as simple as possible. It is a fact that the originality, beauty, and style of a writer cannot be translated fully into another language but the sense can be conveyed and that has been earnestly attempted in this translation from Urdu to English. The translation of the verses of the Qur'an mostly has been taken from the translation of Abdullah Yousuf Ali (Allah's mercy be upon him).

Author's Preface

Under the influence of Western scholars, a large number of scholars of the East have also come to hold that Islamic civilization is a continuation of past civilizations, especially of the Roman and the Greek civilizations, and that the Arabs shuffled the old elements in a new way and just changed their appearance to make it seem a different civilization. Due to this concept, these people try to identify the ingredients of the Islamic Civilization with the civilizations of Iran, Babylon (Iraq), Syria, Egypt, Greece, Rome and Phoenicia (on the coast of Syria, its people, language and art). They try to trace the divers heritage of Arab culture and think that Arabs are the main builders of Islamic civilization. They assume that it is the Arab factor which took the suitable material from other civilizations and combined them in its own style.

A Misunderstanding

However, it is a big misunderstanding. I do not deny that history influences man's condition, and the material of previous fabric of thought may be used in any new construction, but I would like to add that the Islamic civilization in its essence and nature is purely Islamic. It is not influenced by any un-Islamic factor, excepting in nonessential or accidental matters. Arab mentality, Arabian traditions, and the effects of past civilizations, as well as later concurrent civilizations, may have influenced the Islamic civilization to a minor extent. Two considerations are generally made about a building: the first is its layout, its specific style of construction, its purpose, and its suitability to its purpose; these things are basic and essential for a building. The other things are its colour its decor, and painting, these are nonessential things. As far as its base and foundation is concerned, the edifice of Islamic civilization is the outcome of Islam's own plan of construction. Nothing has been borrowed from other layouts.

Islam has invented its own style of building; it has not copied any other model; its purpose of construction is unique. No other building has been constructed for this purpose, before it or after it. In the same way, for achieving this purpose, the edifice of Islamic civilization is perfectly suited, and no foreign engineer can add or delete anything of value to this architecture. As far as nonessential things are concerned, Islam has taken from others very few things; it can even be said that actually everything is its own design. Muslim architects made additions to the borrowed factors of colour and decoration, and unfortunately the nonessential borrowed things became so prominent that by seeing them, they (above-mentioned scholars) mistake the building of Islamic civilization for a copied model.

What Is Civilization?

In order to arrive at any conclusion, we have, at first, to find the answer to the question: What is civilization? Generally, people think that science and manners, arts and crafts, ways of social life, style of culture and conduct of politics, or a conglomeration of these things, is called 'civilization'. In fact, this is not civilization, these are the results and facades of a civilization; in other words, these are not the roots of civilization, they are branches and leaves. The value of a civilization cannot be determined by its external appearances and its fancy dresses. For determining the value of a civilization, we should delve deep into its soul and explore its foundation.

The Ingredients of Civilization

The first thing that should be searched out about a civilization is its concept of worldly life. What does it say about the status of man in this world? How does it see the world? What type of relation has man with the world? What concept should man use in the world? This question about the concept of life is so important that it deeply influences the deeds and actions of man, and with the change of concepts, the type of civilization changes.

The other question, deeply related to the concept of life, is the question of the purpose of life. What is the purpose of man's life in this world? This entire struggle, labour, competition, hardship and endurance by man: what is it for? What is the target toward which man should race? What is the ultimate aim that he should focus on? This question of the target determines the direction of man's practical life, his advancement, lines of action, and selection of means that can lead him to success.

The third question is: On what thoughts and beliefs does a civilization build the human character? How does it mould the human mind? What kind of thoughts does it instil in the human mind and heart? What are those incentives that inspire man to lead a particular kind of life that conforms with the ultimate aim of civilization? It is an indisputable fact that man's powers of action are subject to his powers of intellect. The soul, whose place is in man's mind and heart, keeps his limbs moving, whatever thought or belief dominates his mind, man's powers of action work under it. According to one's way of thinking, passions and feelings arise in man's heart, and he moves under their influence. So, no civilization can be established without a fundamental belief and basic concept. On this basis, before evaluating the worth of a civilization it is necessary to understand its basic concept and belief, its good qualities and its shortcomings, in the same way as for finding the strength and stability of a building, it is necessary to find out how deep and strong its foundation is.

The fourth question is: What kind of men does a particular civilization produce? In other words, what moral training does it give that can prepare men to lead successful lives. What characteristics and qualities does a civilization inculcate and develop in men? How are men prepared through its special training? No doubt, the real purpose of a civilization is to build a collective system but there must be individuals who are used as bricks for building the edifice of a nation. The stability of an edifice depends on the fineness and strength of each stone, brick, and beam. Any wood eaten by weevil or any weak

material must be rejected. Therefore, the question of preparing individuals by means of a civilization is essential.

The fifth question is: How are relations established between man and man, keeping in view their different status and positions? Man's relations with his family, his neighbours, friends, colleagues, subordinates, superiors, followers of his own civilization and those who differ from it? What are his rights upon others, and what are others' rights toward him? With what limits has he been restricted? What are the limits to his freedom? Under this question come all the problems relating to moral and social life, law, politics, and international relations; and how a civilization manages family, society, and the government.

From this discussion, we conclude that a civilization comprises five elements:

1. The concept about worldly life
2. The aim of life
3. The fundamental thoughts and beliefs
4. The training of individuals
5. The collective system

Every civilization of the world is made of these five elements. Islamic civilization also has been made in the same way. In this book I have discussed the first three elements and explained on what fundamentals Islamic civilization has been established. These are as follows. What specific concept it has about worldly life. What aim it has prescribed for man's life, and what are its fundamental beliefs and thoughts. The last two elements have not been discussed in this book. As far as the training of individuals is concerned, study of my book *Islami Ibadat per aik Tahqiqi Nazar* (*A Critical View on Islamic Ways of Worship*) and 20–28 chapters in my book *Khutb'at* (*Let Us Be Muslim*, translated by the late Khurram Jah Murad) is recommended. The fifth element relates to the subject of the collective system, a brief layout of it can be found in my speeches that have been published under the title of *Islam Ka Nizam-e-Hayat* (*Islamic Way of Life*).

Fundamentals of Islamic Civilization

Man's assessment of himself has always been uneven, which has greatly influenced his conduct and ethics. Throughout the history of mankind, he has seemed to be swinging from one extreme to another. Sometimes he proclaims himself the highest and greatest being on the earth and turns so arrogant and pompous that he is not prepared even to concede the possibility of the presence of someone higher and greater than himself or even equal to him. He proclaims, as Pharaoh had proclaimed, "I am your Lord the highest" (As-Sajda – 32:7), and then he challenges, as Pharaoh had challenged, "Who is more powerful than I?"

Sometimes he declares, as Aad had declared with blind arrogance, "Who is superior to us in strength?" (Fussilat – 41:15). As a result he assumes that he is not answerable to anyone, and that nobody can take him to account. He turns a tyrant and an oppressor and a demon of evil and chaos on the earth. This is one extreme while the other extreme he assumes himself to be the lowest and meanest creature of the earth, and worships anything supposedly beneficial or harmful to him, such as trees, stones, rivers, mountains, animals, fire, clouds, lightning, or sun and the stars. When a human form appears to him very strong and powerful, he seems to be willing to accept it as his Lord and God.

The Reality About Human Beings

Islam has rejected both the extremes and presented the real position of humans on the earth. The Qur'an says, "Now let man but think from what he is created! He is created from a drop emitted proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs" (At-Tariq – 86:5–7). It adds, "Does not man see that it was We Who created him from sperm yet behold! He (stands forth) as an open adversary" (Ya-sin – 36:77). Furthermore,

"And He began the creation of man from clay, and made his seed from a drop of despised fluid but He fashioned him in due proportion breathed into him of His spirit" (As-Sajda – 32:7–9). Elsewhere, it is stated,

> We created you out of dust, then out of sperm, then out of a leechlike clot, then out of a little lump of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, in order that We may manifest (Our Power) to you, and We cause whom We will to rest in the wombs for an appointed term. Then do We bring you out as babes, then (foster you) that you may reach your age of full strength, and some of you are called to die, and some are sent back to feeblest old age. So that they know nothing after having known much. (Al-Hajj – 22:5)

Or, the following verse: "O man, what has seduced you from your Lord Most Beneficent. Him Who created you, fashioned you in due proportion and gave you a just view. In whatever form He wills, does He put you together" (Al-Infitar – 82:6–8). Again, "It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when you knew nothing, and He gave you hearing and sight, intelligence and affections, that you may give thanks (to Allah)" (An-Nahl – 16:78). Some other verses read as follows,

> Do you then see the (human seed) that you emit? It is you who create it, or are We the Creator? We have decreed death to be your common lot, and We are not to be frustrated from changing your forms and creating you again in (forms) that you know not, and you certainly know already the first form of creation, why then do you not take heed? See you the seed that you sow in the ground? Is it you that cause it to grow or are We the cause? Were it Our will? We could make it chaff and you would be left in wonderment (saying) we are indeed left with debts (for nothing)! Indeed we are deprived! See you the water, which you drink. Do you bring it down (in rain) from the cloud or do We? Were it our will We could make it brackish (and unpalatable), were it Our will. Then why do you not give thanks? Do you see the fire, which you kindle, is it you who grow the tree which feeds the fire, or do We

> grow it? We have made it a reminder, and an article of comfort and convenience for the denizens of deserts, then glorify the name of your Lord, the Supreme. (Al-Waqi'a – 56:58–74).

> When distress seizes you at sea, those that you call upon—besides Him, leave you in the lurch! But when He brings you back safely to land, you turn away (from Him). Most ungrateful is man! Do you then feel secure that He will not cause you to be swallowed up beneath the earth, when you are on land, or that He will not send against you a violent tornado (with showers of stones) so that you shall find no protection? Or do you feel secure that He will not send you back a second time to sea and send against you a heavy gale to drown you because of your ingratitude, so that you find no helper therein against Us. (Al-Israa – 17:67–69).

Almighty God smashed the arrogance and self-conceit of man in the above-quoted verses and showed him of what substance he is made. Here is the gist of the contents of the verses, quoted above. Man is nothing more than a filthy and dirty drop of water that turns into an embryo (an organism in its early stages of development). If God wills, He gives life to the embryo, if not, it is wasted. In case the embryo is given life, Allah gives it the senses, and it enters into this world as a helpless baby.

God provides him all means and powers necessary for living – progressing stage by stage, he comes to full youth then grows old; and again he is as helpless as a baby. He loses his senses, his powers are weakened, forgetfulness replaces knowledge, at last he dies, departs from his wealth, children, near and dear ones, and finds his abode in the grave. In his short life he had no power to keep himself alive. It is Allah, the Creator and Sustainer, Who kept him alive and when He orders him to quit this world, he has no choice but to pass from this world to another world. As long as man lives in this world he is bound by the laws of nature. He needs air, water, light, and the products of the soil. None of these provisions is in his control, none of this does he create and none of these forces obey to his will and desire. Whenever these forces work against him he is quite helpless. A hurricane or a tornado pulls down his lofty

buildings and ruins his towns, a storm can easily sink his splendid ships, in bottomless seas, an earthquake decimates a whole big city in a few seconds.

Whatever means and equipment man gathers through his scientific knowledge, intellect, and wisdom, all prove futile and perishable before the power of God. In spite of this weakness and helplessness, man strides the earth with arrogance and pompousness, and apes Pharoh and Nimrod. He rules the people like an oppressor, tyrant, despot or aggressor, revolts against God, makes himself Lord of the people, and causes disturbance and chaos on the earth of God.

Man's Position in the Universe

This is the subject matter of the verses of the Holy Qur'an. In these verses God denounces the arrogance of man and clearly describes his real status. The Holy Qur'an says man is neither the lowest and meanest creature, nor the highest and greatest one. The Holy Qur'an says,

> We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good an pure; and conferred on them special favours above a great part of Our creation. (Al-Israa – 17:76)
>
> See you not that Allah has made subject to you (men) all that is on the earth. (Al-Hajj – 22:65)
>
> And cattle he has created for you – from them you derive warmth and numerous benefits and of their (meat) you eat, and you have a sense of pride and beauty in them as you drive them home in the evening and as you lead them forth to pasture in the morning. They carry their heavy loads to lands that you could not (otherwise) reach except with souls distressed; for your Lord is indeed most Kind, most Merciful, and (He has created) horses, mules, and donkeys, for you to ride and as an adornment, and He has created other things of which you have no knowledge. Allah alone can show the right path but there are ways that turn aside; if Allah had willed He could guide all of you. It is He Who sends down rain from the sky, from it you drink, and out of it (grows) the vegetation on which you feed your cattle,

> with it He produces for you corn, olives, date palms, grapes, and every kind of fruit. Verily in this is a sign for those who give thought. He has made subject to you the night and the day; the sun and the moon; and the stars are in subjection by His command; verily in this are signs for men who are wise and the things on the earth which He has multiplied in varying colors (and qualities); verily in this a sign for men who are mindful. It is He Who has made the sea subject, that you may eat thereof flesh that is fresh and tender, and that you may you extract there from ornaments to wear; and you see the ships therein that plough the waves that may you seek (thus) of the bounty of Allah, and that you may be grateful. And He has set up on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with you; and rivers and ways; that you may guide yourselves; and marks and signposts and by the stars (men) guide themselves. Is He who creates like one that creates not? Will you not receive admonition? If you did, you would count up the favours of Allah you would not be able to number them; for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (An-Nahl – 16:5–18)

In these verses God (SWT) explains that all the things on the earth as well as in space are created, governed, and employed for man, for his benefit and for providing services to him. These trees, oceans, rivers, mountains, animals, day and night, darkness and light, moon and stars, all these creations of God (SWT) are servants to man and work for his benefit and they are useful to him in many ways. Man is superior to all of them. He has been given the noble status of a ruler on the earth but the irony arises when the master bows down to the minion, as they are his providers. He asks their favour and beseeches them with great humility to help him. He fears them. He places offerings before them. In this way he humiliates himself and lowers his own status. He makes himself the servant of servants, a slave of slaves.

Man Is Viceroy of God

This explanation of the Holy Qur'an shows that man is not supreme, as he thinks, and on the other hand, he is not as low

and abject as he has made himself. So naturally, the question arises what is the right position and status of man in this world? Islam has the answer to this question. The Holy Qur'an explains:

> Behold your Lord said to the angels, "I will create a viceroy on earth." They said. "Will you place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? While we do celebrate your praises and glorify your holy name?" He said, "I know what you know not." And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said, "Tell me the names of these if you are right." They said, "Glory to You, of knowledge we have none save what you have taught us; in truth it is You Who are perfect in knowledge and wisdom." He said, "O Adam! Tell them their names." When he told them their names, Allah said, "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth and I know what you reveal and what you conceal?" And behold, We said to angels, "Bow to Adam"; and they bowed down; not so Iblis; he refused and was haughty; he was of those who reject Faith. And We said, "O Adam, dwell you and your wife in the garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) you will; but approach not this tree, or you will run into harm and transgression. Then did Satan make them slip from the (Garden) and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been. (Al-Baqarah – 2:30–36)

> Behold! Your Lord said to the angels, 'I am about to create man, from sounding clay from mud moulded into shape; when I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of my spirit, fall you down in obeisance unto him.' So the angels prostrated themselves, all of them together; not so Iblis: he refused to be among those who prostrated themselves. (Allah) said, 'O Iblis! What is your reason for not being among those who prostrated themselves?' (Iblis) said, 'I am not one to prostrate myself to man, whom you did create from sounding clay, from mud moulded into shape.' (Allah) said, 'Then get you out from here; for you are rejected, accursed. And the curse

shall be on you till the Day of Judgement.' (Al-Hijr – 15:28–35)

This subject has been discussed in the Qur'an in different ways, at various places. The essence of it is that God appointed man as His viceroy on the earth and gave him knowledge more than that given to angels. He gave precedence to the knowledge of man over the angel's praising and glorifying His name. He (God) commanded angels to prostrate before Adam. Angels obeyed the command and bowed down before Adam. In this way angelic power yielded to Adam. On the contrary Iblis (satan) refused to do so; in other words the Satanic power did not accept the superiority of man. No doubt, Adam was a sculpture made of clay but God breathed into him His Spirit and gave him knowledge; this made him fit to be elevated to the position of God's viceroy. The angels accepted his superiority but satan did not do so. He was denounced by God because of his rebellion. However, satan's request for a respite until the Day of Judgement to try to make man go astray was granted by God. The satan lured man and succeeded in getting man out of Paradise; since that time a war has gone on between man and satan. God has already admonished man: "if you will follow the guidance sent down by Me you will enter Paradise. Conversely, if you obey Satan your abode will be in Hell."

The Position of Viceroy

The verses mentioned above and the essence of the contents highlight a few points. This position demands that he should be obedient to God; he should not be loyal and obedient to anyone else. To be disobedient to Allah and to be loyal and obedient to others means that, in both cases, he will be considered a traitor and a transgressor, and liable to a just punishment.

As a viceroy man is allowed to use his Master's property and rule over the people, but must keep in view that they are not his slaves or servants, they belong to his Master's, and he is bound to rule over them according to his Master's guidance.

The worst betrayal made by man is that he gets a position and remuneration from one master but works for another master. If a viceroy or governor declares himself independent or becomes loyal and subordinate to some one else, other than his real master, he will be considered a traitor. In both cases, he will receive deserved dismissal from the position of viceroy and earn punishment.

> Whosoever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. But those who reject faith and belie our signs, they shall be companions of the fire. (Al-Baqarah – 2:38–39)

A viceroy or trustee is not independent so as to do whatever he wishes and use his master's property and his subjects arbitrarily. He does not enjoy absolute power. He is always answerable to his Master. His Master has the power to judge his actions and give him reward or punishment accordingly. The first and foremost thing for man is to have a clear concept about his own status and position, whether he is independent, or viceroy to a higher authority. If he clearly understands that he is a viceroy then he should accept the Sovereignty and Supreme Authority of his Master, because without this acceptance he will not be able to get the real sense of accountability. The concept of viceregency and trusteeship creates a particular conduct marked by honesty, truthfulness, and responsibility. Any other concept cannot create the same conduct in man.

If hypothetically we accept that some other kinds of concepts and beliefs can create the above-described conduct even if true, it will be useless for man because by denying the sovereignty of his real master, he has turned himself into a traitor and a punishable transgressor. For his good conduct he may be seeking reward from himself or from those whom he followed, obeyed, and tried to please by displaying his good conduct to them.

Man in his origin is a feeble and weak creature, but he received the honour of being the best creation of God. Though he was made of clay, God placed His soul in high stature, and

appointed him His viceroy on the earth. The man must prove by his conduct that he deserves the honour and position given by God. If man, instead of following the guidance of God, follows satan then certainly he lose both the status and honour and will fall down to a powerless and helpless position.

By bowing down to him, the angelic powers have already accepted him as God's viceroy. On the contrary, satanic powers refused to accept his superior position and determined to make man their own slave. In this situation, if man follows the guidance of God, the angelic powers will support him, and armies of angels will come down to help him against the forces of satan. Contrary to this, if man follows satanic forces, they will be his helpers then he will face the same fate that satan and his armies will face in the end.

As viceroy of God, man enjoys a higher status and is superior to all other creations of God. The whole universe and all things in it are created for man, to be at his service. All of them are subordinate to him and he has the authority to use them for different jobs according to the ways prescribed by God. If man forgets his higher status and bows down to his servants, then he undermines his own position, and makes himself and the position of viceroy disgraceful, and proves to be unworthy of this position. As a viceroy man is supposed to be obedient and loyal to God and his basic duty is to enforce His guidance on his own self, and call others to enter the circle of God's obedience. But he often forgets that God is his Lord, and He has appointed him as His viceroy, and that to prostrate before his Lord is a great honour for him.

The Holy Qur'an declares clearly that no particular individual or group is the viceroy of God; all of mankind has been appointed as God's viceroy; each individual of mankind, being God's viceroy, is equal in status to all other fellow beings. Hence, no one should bow down to others and no one has the right to demand that others bow down to him. The only demand he can make to others is to obey God, the real Master. Whoever excels in obeying God will deserve to be in the commanding position, and others should follow him, not

because he is their master but because he is the viceroy of their Lord.

As all men have been given the position of viceroy, they are accountable for their own responsibilities. So nobody is punishable or rewardable for others' actions. Nobody can absolve others of their responsibilities, and nobody will be condemned or punished for the bad deeds of others. As long as man lives, he is the viceroy of God, and his tenure as such ends at his death; that will be the time for taking his account, and judging how he fulfiled his responsibilities as viceroy. If his performance is found up to the mark, he will receive fair rewards that he deserves. If he has failed to fulfil his responsibilities and abused the power and status given to him, he will be punished appropriately.

The Concept of Life in Islam

The word *viceroy* takes us to an important point and it is that a viceroy has to do what his master wants him to do, and he has to do full justice to his responsibility. The key to being a successful viceroy is to adopt the master's characteristics and His way of dealing with different matters. He should act like a wise governor who tries to copy his king; and learns how his king looks after his subjects; how kind he is to them and manages peace and security for them; and how soft he is on some occasions and strict on others. How wisely he acts, as situations demand. When it has been accepted that man is the viceroy of God on the earth, then he has to rule within his small dominion with the same kindness and justice as God governs the whole universe.

Man Is a Servant and Trustee

The Holy Qur'an says,

> He has made you the inheritors of the earth. He has raised you in ranks, above some others; that He may try you in the gifts He has given you, for your Lord is quick in punishment; yet He is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Al-An'am – 6:166)

The Qur'an further states,

> They said: "We have had (nothing but) trouble, both before and after you came to us." He said, "it may be that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you inheritors in the earth; that so He may see how you behave. (Al-Araf – 7:129)

> O David! We did indeed make you a viceroy on earth; so judge you between men in truth (and justice) nor follow you the lust (of your heart), for it will mislead you from the path of Allah; for those who wander astray from the path of Allah, is a chastisement grievous, for that they forget the Day of Account. (Sad – 38:26)

The Qur'an says, again,

> Is not Allah The Wisest of Judges? (At-Tin – 95:8)

> The decision rests with none but Allah. (Al-An'am – 6:57)

> Say: O Allah, Lord of Power (and Rule), You give power to whom you please, and You strip off power from whom you please; You endue with honour whom You please, and You bring low whom You please; in Your hand is all good. Verily, over all things you have power. (Al-i-Imran – 3:26)

> Follow (O man) the revelation given unto you from your Lord and follow not, as friends or protectors, other than Him. (Al-A'raf – 7:3)

> Say: "Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice; my life and death are (all) for Allah The Cherisher of the Worlds." (Al-An'am – 6:162)

These verses of the Qur'an clearly show that man is not the owner of the things he finds in this world. He is not even the owner of his own body and all the powers he possesses. The real owner is God. Man is not free to use all these things according to his own wishes and desires. He has to use them according to the will and pleasure of God. He is the representative of God in this world and is bound to use all his powers according to the guidance of his Lord. If he neglects the guidance of God and acts on his own or follows powers other

than God, then he will be considered a transgressor and a traitor.

The First Condition for Success

The Qur'an says,

> And it is those who believe in vanities and reject Allah, who are the losers. (Al-Ankabut – 29:52)
>
> And if any of you turn back from their faith and die in unbelief, their works will bear no fruit in this life and the hereafter. (Al-Baqarah – 2:217)
>
> Whoso rejects faith, fruitless is his work and he will be among the losers in the hereafter. (Al-Maidah – 5:5)

These verses of the Qur'an clearly show that the success of man in this world depends on this acceptance of God's supreme power and authority that made him His representative. So he must always be conscious in all his doings that he is not independent; he is merely a trustee and viceroy of God. Without accepting and realizing his own status, whatever engineering he does with God's property, wealth, and subjects will be considered as a rebellious act. If a rebel captures the power and manages the country very well, in spite of this, the real owner, the king, will consider him a rebel, and punishable.

However pious a rebel may be, in the king's eyes he is a traitor. The King will not give him any credit for his good services and management; however good an administrator he may be, the king will treat him as a rebel.

The World Is for Use

The Qur'an says,

> O you people, eat of what is on earth lawful and good; and do not follow the footsteps of Satan for he is to you an avowed enemy. For he commands you what is evil and shameful, and that you should say of Allah that of which you have no knowledge. (Al-Baqarah – 2:168–169)
>
> O you who believe, make not unlawful the good things which Allah has made lawful for you but transgress not for

> Allah loves not transgressors. Eat of the things which Allah has provided for you, lawful and good; but fear Allah, in whom you believe. (Al-Maidah – 5:87–88)
>
> Say: "Who has forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of Allah, which He has produced for His servants, and the things clean and pure, (which he has provided) for sustenance?" (Al-A'raf – 7:32)
>
> For he (the messenger) commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure); he releases them from their heavy burden and from yokes that are upon them. (Al-A'raf – 7:157)
>
> It is no crime in you if you seek of the bounty of your Lord. (Al-Baqarah – 2:198)
>
> But monasticism, which they (followers of Jesus) invented for themselves We ordained it not for them–only seeking Allah's pleasure, and they observed it not with right observance. (Al-Hadid – 57:27)
>
> Many are the Jinns and men We have made for Hell: They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, –nay more misguided; for they are heedless (of warning). (Al-A'raf – 7:179)

These verses of the Qur'an show that the world is not a thing to be abandoned, abhorred, or to run away from. This world has been created for man and he has to use it and use it fully, but while using it, he should see that its usage must be in the right way. Also, he should see what is pure and impure, and what is just and unjust. God has given him eyes to see, ears to listen, and a mind to think. If he does not use his senses, his organs and his skills of reason, then there will be no difference between him and animals.

The Destiny of the World

The Qur'an says,

Verily, the promise of Allah is true; let not then this present life deceive you, nor let the chief deceiver deceive you about Allah. (Luqman – 31:33)

But the wrongdoers pursued the enjoyment of the good things of life which were given them, and persisted in sin. (Hud – 11:116)

Set forth to them the similitude of the life of this world; it is like the rain, which We send down from the skies; the earth's vegetation absorbs it. But soon it becomes dry stubble, which the winds scatter; it is only Allah Who prevails over all things. Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world; but the things that endure, good deeds, are best in the sight of thy Lord, as rewards, and best as (the foundation for) hopes. (Al-Kahf – 18:45–46)

O you who believe! Let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. If any act thus, surely they are the losers. (Al-Munafiqun – 63:9)

It is not your wealth nor your sons that will bring you nearer to Us in degree; but only those who believe and do righteousness – these are the ones for whom there is a multiplied reward for their deeds, while secure they (reside) in the dwellings high. (Saba – 34:37)

Know you (all) that the life of this world is but play and pastime, adornment and mutual boasting and multiplying, in (rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children; as the likeness of vegetation after rain, whereof the growth is pleasing to the tillers but afterward it dries and you see it turning yellow, then it becomes straw. And in hereafter there is grievous punishment and (also) forgiveness from Allah and His good pleasure, whereas the life of the world is but a matter of illusion. (Al-Hadid – 57:20)

Do you build a landmark on every high place to amuse yourselves? And do you get for yourselves fine buildings in the hope of living therein (for ever)? (Ash-Shu'araa – 26:128–129)

Will you be left secure in (the enjoyment of) all that you have here? Gardens and springs, and corn fields and date

palms with spathes near breaking (with the weight of fruit)? And you carve houses out of (rocky) mountains with great skill. (Ash-Shu'araa – 26:146–149)

Wherever you are death will find you out, even if you are in towers built up strong and high! (An-Nisaa – 4:78)

Every soul shall have a taste of death in the end to Us shall you be brought back. (Al-Ankabut – 29:57)

Did you then think that We had created you in jest, and that you would not be brought back to us (for account). (Al-Muminun – 23:115)

Verses of the Qur'an cited above show the other face of the world. The verses cited in the previous chapter explained that the world is for man and it has been created for his use. Here the Qur'an explains that we are not for the world, we are not subservient to the world and its transitory things, and we should not be engrossed in the world, being lured by the beauties and luxuries of the world. Man must not nurture the conception that life will not come to an end, and that he will live and enjoy the world forever. It should always be borne in mind that all this wealth, treasures of precious jewels, and pride and pomp, are in fact temporary in nature, they are perishable and they lure man to forgetfulness. Their destiny and fate is death. All of these things, including man's own self, will dissolve in dust. In this passing world the only lasting things are his good deeds, the goodness of human heart and soul, and the goodness of man's actions.

Responsibility of Actions and Accountability

The Qur'an says,

Verily the hour is coming I have almost kept it hidden, for every soul to receive its reward by the measure of its endeavor. (Ta-Ha – 20:15)

Do you receive a reward other than that which you have earned by your deeds? (An-Naml – 27:90)

That man can have nothing but what he strives for that (the fruit of) his striving will soon come in sight; then will he be

rewarded with a reward complete; that to your Lord is the final goal. (An-Najm – 53:39–42)

But those who were blind in this world will be blind in the hereafter, and most astray from the path. (Al-Israa – 17:72)

And whatever good you send forth for your souls before you, you shall find it with Allah; for Allah sees well all that you do. (Al-Baqarah – 2:110)

And fear the day when you shall be brought back to Allah. Then shall every soul be paid what it earned and none shall be dealt with unjustly. (Al-Baqarah – 2:281)

On the day when every soul will be confronted with all the good it has done and all the evil it has done. (Al-i-Imran – 3:30)

The balance that day will be true (to a nicety) those whose scale (of good) will be heavy, will prosper; those whose scale will be light will find their souls in perdition, for that they wrongfully treated Our signs. (Al-A'raf – 7:8–9)

Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it. (Al-Zalzalah – 99:7–8)

And their Lord accepted of them, and answered them: "Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, he be male or female." (Al-i-Imran – 3:195)

And spend something (in charity) out of the substance, which We have bestowed on you, before death should come to any of you and he should say; "O my Lord! Why did you not give me respite for a little while? I should then have given (largely) in charity, and I should have been one of the doers of good." But to no soul will Allah grant respite when the time appointed (for it) has come; and Allah is well acquainted with (all) that you do. (Al-Munafiqun – 63:10–11)

If only you could see the time when the guilty ones will bend low their heads before their Lord (saying): "Our Lord! We have seen and we have heard; now then send us back (to the world) we will work righteousness; for we do

indeed (now) believe." If We had so willed We could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance but the word from Me will come true. I will fill hell with jinns and men all together. Taste you then – for you forgot the meeting of the day of yours and We too will forget you, taste you the chastisement of eternity for your (evil) deeds! (As-Sajda – 32:14)

Here it is clear that the world is a field of action, and it is the place for struggle; and the life after death is for the rewarding of good deeds, and punishing for his deeds. This life is a reprieve for man until his death. He will have no time or chance to do anything when the moment of his departure from this world arrives. So he should act with full understanding that his every action, whether good or bad, produces an impact, and in proportion to this impact reward or punishment will be meted out to him. Whatever he gets there, good or bad, will be the result of his actions in this world. No good deed by him will go unrewarded, and no bad deed will remain unpunished.

Individual Responsibility

To strengthen the sense of responsibility, it has been explained clearly that everybody is responsible for his own actions, and no one else shares this responsibility. And nobody can save him from the consequences of his actions.

The Holy Qur'an says,

O you who believe! Guard your own souls; if you follow (right) guidance no hurt can come to you from those who stray. (Al-Maidah – 5:105)

Say, "Shall I seek for my Lord other than Allah when He is the Cherisher of all things (that exist). Every soul earns only on its own account, nor does any bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another." (Al-An'am – 6:164)

Of no profit to you will be your relatives and your children on the day of judgment; He will judge between you; for Allah sees well all that you do. (Al-Mumtahana – 60:3)

If you did well, you did well for yourselves; if you did evil (you did it) against yourselves. (Al-Israa – 17:7)

> Nor can a bearer of burdens bear another's burden. If one heavily laden should call another to bear his load, not the least portion of it can be carried (by the other) even though he be nearly related. (Fatir – 35:18)

> O mankind! Do your duty to Your Lord and fear (the coming of) a day when no father can avail anything for his son, nor a son avail anything for his father. (Luqman – 31:33)

> Those who reject faith will suffer from that rejection; and those who work righteousness will make provision for themselves (in heaven). (Ar-Rum – 30:44)

These verses of the Qur'an show us that everybody individually bears the burden of responsibility for his deeds, and no room is left for believing that someone else may expiate for his wrongdoings. No ground exists for the wishful thinking that we may be saved from the consequences of our bad deeds, because of our personal connections. It has also been made clear that nobody's sin will undermine other's good deeds. Nobody else's pleasure other than God's has anything to do with the acceptance or rejection of deeds; only God's pleasure will matter. Fire burns, and honey tastes sweet, but nobody can feel the heat of fire or sweetness of honey unless he himself comes in contact with them. In the same way, each and every individual will experience the consequences of his bad deeds and reward for good deeds, and he will be judged individually. Therefore the Qur'an advises that while living in the world, everybody should have a great sense of responsibility, and he should live his life with the full understanding that he himself is responsible for his actions, and he alone will bear the consequences of bad deeds, and he alone will enjoy the sweet fruits of his goodness.

The foregoing elucidation of the concept of life in Islam encompasses all its basic elements. Leaving the analysis aside, we may now direct our attention toward the total paradigm. Putting together all these elements, we may conceive the whole picture of the Islamic concept of life, and see how far this concept conforms with human nature, and the truth. One may

also compare the value and worth of this concept with the other concepts of life that prevail in the world. You can also see how civilization is built on these concepts of life, and how they have shaped the mind and actions of man.

The Natural Concept of Life

For a while turn your eyes from different concepts of life, presented by different religions, and then observe the world around you, as a neutral observer. Ponder over your own position in the world around you, and you will realize that some of the things appearing before your eyes are prominent and very clear.

The first thing you will notice is that whatever you possess is limited, and the senses through which you acquire knowledge and collect information are not able to function beyond a short range. The faculties on which you depend are able to control only a few things. There are many things around you greater than you, in power as well as in body, and against these things your own being looks fragile and weak. In this huge workshop of the universe, great powers are in action, and they are not in your hands, you cannot control them, and you find yourself helpless against them. Physically your strength is so little that you can only dominate small things around you, and bigger and more powerful things often subdue you.

However, you have a special power that makes you superior to all creatures, and by using that power you are able to control the animals that are greater than you in body and strength and you are able to benefit from them. Through the same power you are able to use various things that exist around you for various services, and also explore new sources of energy and use them in different ways. With the same power, you are able to develop the tools to acquire knowledge, and to reach the things that are out of your reach.

Briefly speaking, you have been given the power and by using it you can become master of most of the things that exist around you in the world. However, there are things in this universe that are not under your direct control. For example:

air, water, light, and heat. These substances sustain your life. They work under a system. All such powers, normally and generally, are working in your favour. They are not acting against you. They are helping you. They are serving you in your own interest. In other words, all these powers have been made subject to you.

It is the fact that when you observe the things and powers surrounding you, you will certainly reach the conclusion that there exists a great law and system. Every thing, big or small, in the universe is working under that system, in such a way that from the huge planets to the smallest particles nothing can escape from the minutely calculated system; you, your own being, is tied with the system. But there is a great difference between you and other objects of the universe. The other objects have no power to make any move against the system. You have power to act against the law of nature. But you cannot escape from the consequences of going against the law; you have to suffer losses because of it. Under a supreme law construction and destruction are both taking place in the universe, and nothing in this world eludes this process, not even those things that appear to be permanent and eternal. If deeply observed, it will be seen that they also suffer the changes constantly taking place in them. We do not know how they feel about these changes, whether they are happy or sad, because they are deprived of senses. If they have senses, we are unaware of them. If animals have some feeling about the changes occurring in them, they are supposed to be limited, but a human being has such a great power of thinking and sensing that he reacts to change by being sad or happy. Sometimes he is so happy that he forgets sadness and does not want even to think about the agony and chaos that exist around him. When things go against him, he is so much in despair and grief that he sees the world full of destruction and chaos. He forgets that there are positive prospects to build something useful.

It does not matter how much you are affected by sadness or happiness. Whether you are happy or sad, you are bound to be involved in this world, and use all of your faculties to deal with

worldly affairs. To keep yourself alive is a very powerful instinct and because of that you have a strong urge for food and water. This urge obligates an endless struggle.

Another very powerful impulse is sex. Our God, the Creator, wants to perpetuate the human generation, so He gave man and woman the power of sex that compels them to act to accomplish the ultimate aim of nature, reproduction. You have been given some other natural urges; all these urges are so powerful that they use you as their instruments of fulfilment. Now, it depends on your wisdom and intellect to accomplish the aims of nature, in a nice way or in an ugly manner, with wholeheartedness, or under pressure and irritation. You also have the choice to work or not to work for the ends of nature. With this advantage of choice, there is another law of nature, if you fulfil the aims of nature willingly and in an agreeable way, it is in your best interest. But if you turn your back to it, or obey nature perfunctorily you are bound to come to grief.

Concepts of Different Religions

If man of good nature and large outlook thinks about the universe and compares it with his own self, certainly, he will note all the points mentioned above. Different groups of people have seen this great universe from different points of view.

So, often people were attracted to the most noticeable features of the universe, and formed their opinion according to their own hasty observations. They did not bother themselves to see the great creation of the universe from other points of view. For example, some people focused on the helplessness and weakness of humans, contrasting them with the great forces of nature. They concluded that man is a very weak and a tiny creature. This concept became so dominant that they could not see other points of view that elevate the status of mankind and put it above the whole universe. They could not see the bright aspects of mankind, which was overshadowed by their perception of man as a weak and helpless creature. They could not see the real status of mankind and its superiority over all other creatures. Idol worship, star worship, and worship of

other objects of nature are the products of the above-mentioned concepts.

Another group of people looked at the world as a place full of chaos and disorder. They thought:

> The aim of the whole universe is for nothing but to torture man, and inflict pain and grief on him; all the relations between man and man and different groups of people are indeed traps of disaster and misery.

People who belong to this group believe that not only man, but the whole universe, is in the grip of death and dejection, that destruction underlies construction; that before the bloom of spring, there is the devastating onslaught of winter. No doubt, the tree of life flourishes, but soon death lays its hand on it to eliminate it. Indeed the beauty of life appears again and again, in different charming arpects, with its decoration and adoration, only to meet the final fate, death and destruction. This way of thinking made these people lose interest in the world and its life. They sought their salvation in monastic ways; they tried killing all of their feelings through abstinence, mortifying their passions, and breaking the order of nature, which they thought was cruelly using man as its tool to run the world.

The people of the other group looked at the world from a different point of view; they thought that the world was a beautiful place, full of luxuries, and by chance they had got a very short time in this world to enjoy and live in luxury. They thought that the best way to enjoy the luxuries was to kill the feeling of pain and grief, because such feelings disturb the enjoyment in life. If nothing is left that causes pain and grief, then there would be a life full of pleasure and enjoyment. They thought the world and everything in it was for man and whatever luxuries he likes to enjoy he should not miss, because when death comes it ends the world and its enjoyment; there will be no life after death; only destruction will prevail.

There is another group of people who think that not only the luxuries and pleasures of the world are sins; the world and life itself is a sin. All worldly things are filth, and have no goodness and purity. If someone wants to enter into the

kingdom of heaven, he must live a monastic life, and whoever wishes to have wealth and power in this world will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. People of this belief, when they realized that a human being is nature-bound to use the world nature, abandoned the idea of entering into the kingdom of heaven. No doubt the idea was very attractive but not strong enough to stop man from fulfiling his natural urges, so they invented a short cut to enter the kingdom of heaven. The short cut was the one time salvaging sacrifice by an intercessor that would discharge the believers of their responsibilities for their actions, and in this way, believers would be forgiven for their sins.

The people of another group, influenced by a deterministic of the law of nature, assumed that man is totally helpless and powerless. They looked at man's position from a different point of view and brought up some evidence on the basis of man's psychology, genealogy, and anatomy, thus they reached the conclusion that man has no choice or command over his actions; he is inescapably bound by the law of nature in such a way that he cannot move against it, he cannot even think against it, and he cannot choose a line of action on his own. Therefore, he is not responsible for any action he performs.

On the contrary, another group of people believed that man is independent. They thought: He is neither under any superior power nor subservient slave to it. He is not answerable to any authority for his actions, except to his own conscience or to the man-made government and its laws. Man is master of the world. Whatever is in the world is subjected to him, and he has power to use everything as he likes. Indeed, he obeys some laws, but these laws have been framed by himself, and only to discipline his actions and for the betterment of his individual life. As far as his collective life is concerned, he is fully independent, and the concept of being answerable to any higher and sovereign power is absurd to him.

These are concepts of different schools of thought about the life of this world. Most of these concepts held such strong sway that they became the foundation of different civilizations and

cultures. Each civilization has special features and is unique in its fashion and style because its basic concept about worldly life demands a specific architectural design for the edifice of a civilization.

How have the concepts about worldly life influenced the development of a particular civilization and given it a special shape and style? This is an interesting subject for research but it is irrelevant to our topic, "the Islamic civilization." Up to this point we have tried to explain that all the concepts of life are the result of a particular point of view. None of these concepts have been formed with a holistic view at the entire universe, according the right status to human beings among the creations of the universe. This is the main reason that when a particular concept of life is critically examined, it appears false and full of errors.

A Special Feature of the Islamic Concept

With the above explanation, it has become clear that compared to all other concepts of life, the Islamic concept of life is natural and realistic. It establishes a true relationship between man and this world. According to the Islamic concept of life, the world is not a thing to be hated and abandoned, nor a thing to fall in love with, so as to be lost in its luxuries. It is neither an unalloyed blessing nor an unredeemed bane. It is not right to abstain from it totally, nor to be absorbed in it totally. It is not wholly defiled, nor entirely pure. Its relation with man is not like a king's relation with his kingdom or like a prisoner's relationship with his prison. Man is not worthless so as to bow down to any power, nor so meritorious that everything else must bow down to him. He is not so helpless that his wish and will are nothing, nor he is so powerful that his wish and will is everything. He is not an absolute ruler of the world, nor a slave of countless masters. Whatever reality is, it lies between the two extremes, it is in the middle.

We reach this conclusion by studying nature and with the help of reason, but Islam guides us further. It establishes the real status of man in this world, and shows us what type of

relation exists between man and the world, and how to use the world. Islam opens man's eyes by saying,

> You are not like other ordinary creatures. On this earth you are the viceroy of God. The world and its powers have been subjected to you. You are the ruler of all creatures and subject to one God; and you are superior to all creatures. But you can keep this position of honour and superiority only by obeying your real Master, God, Who appointed you His viceroy and raised you to this high position. You have been sent down to this world to use it and deal with it. Then the time of your departure from this world will come and you will see the consequences of your deeds in the Hereafter. So, during the short life in this world you should always be conscious of your social and personal responsibilities, and your accountability, and should never be forgetful that God, Master of the universe, will take account in full of all the bounties given to you as a trust.

No doubt, every Muslim does not have this concept present in his mind with all its minute details. Even scholars, in general, do not have a clear vision about the minute details of this concept, except a few. In fact, this concept is the basis of Islamic civilization and has a great influence on Muslim's life.

A Muslim who is brought up in an environment of Islamic civilization, despite the fact that his conduct has been marred by external influences, still has some basic qualities of self-respect. He will not bow down before any power except God. He will not fear anyone but God, and he will not regard any power as his master except God. He believes that everybody is accountable for his own actions, and believes that the world is the place for action and the next world is the place for reaping their consequences, and he believes that success and salvation depends on deeds performed in this world. He also believes that this world, with its wealth and luxuries, is transitory and that only deeds performed in this world, and their consequences, are permanent. These are the beliefs circulating in a Muslim's whole being along with his blood. An observer of deep insight will easily find the effects of these beliefs in his words and actions, though they may be very dim. The beliefs

embedded in a Muslim's soul and heart reflect throughout his life, and its reflections, however dull they may be, do surface up now and then.

Anyone who studies the history of Islamic civilization will clearly see that this civilization remained practical and pure, until it was contaminated by external influences. When it was pure, and working with true Islamic values, its followers used the world as a farmer ploughs and sows a field, extensively, hoping to reap the harvest in the hereafter. They struggled very hard during their whole life, to sow this field thoroughly and cultivate it increasingly so that they could reap more in the next world. They followed a middle path, between an ascetic life and a luxurious way of life. They did not renounce the world, nor did they wallow in the luxuries of the world. They were concerned with the world to rectify its affairs. You will not find such a role model in any other civilization. The concept of being viceroy of God encouraged them to engage in worldly affairs in order to manage them perfectly. Their belief that they were accountable and answerable to God kept them within the limits framed by Islam. Being a viceroy of God, they were very particular about self-respect, and this concept restrained them from being proud and haughty. They were anxious to use all necessary means to perform their duty as viceroy of God, and they had no interest in the luxuries of the world, which would make them oblivious and forgetful of their duties. They used to perform worldly feats, as if they were to live in this world forever, and yet they abstained from the luxuries of the world as if they were travellers on a journey.

After a long time when the Islamic civilization, under the influence of other cultures, lost its real values, and Muslims became void of the original greatness of their character, they did all that was against the Islamic concept of life. They led a luxurious life, built grand palaces, and took great interest in music, painting, making statues, and fine arts. They lived a prodigal and pompous life, which was against Islamic taste. They adopted anti-Islamic ways in government, politics, and other worldly affairs. Despite all these drawbacks, the Islamic

concept of life was deeply implanted in their hearts. It surfaced here and there, and it distinguished them in dignity. One of the Muslim kings of the Mughal period in India did build a grand palace on the bank of the famous river Yamuna, with all the luxuries then imaginable. But he also engraved a stanza of four lines, written by a Persian poet at the back of the palace, close to the hall of entertainment. It read in the translation:

> Your feet are chained. Your heart is locked.
> Beware:
> Your eyes are covered with mud,
> Your feet are held down.
> Beware:
> You are going West but you face the East;
> You are a traveller whose back is toward the final destination;
> Beware.

You may find palaces grander than the palace built by the Mughal King, but you might not find a warning thought like this in any other people. The thought, which warns the builder of a paradise on earth, "You are a traveller whose back is toward the final destination. Beware" is a timely reminder.

You will find many examples of Muslim conquerors in Islamic history. When they entered the land conquered by them, they did not walk with pomp and pride, instead they bowed down to God with thankfulness and gratitude. The Muslim rulers trembled with the fear of God, whenever somebody admonished them; they refrained immediately from acting against Islamic Law. People of questionable character suddenly changed their way of life and became pious just by being warned over minor lapses.

People who loved wealth fanatically, when they happened to remember the evanescence of worldly life and the eternal nature of the next world, distributed their wealth among poor people and adopted a moderate way of life. Despite this deteriorating condition of Muslims in their Islamic conduct and spirit, you can still see menifestitations of Islamic concepts in their collective life and feel a flash of light in the darkness.

The Goal of Life

How does one judge a civilization, and its features, whether they are good or bad? The best way is that first you should know about the goal of life, which a civilization presents to man, because it is this goal of life for which man struggles and spends all of his powers to achieve. This is the goal of life, which organizes man's life. If the goal of life is noble, then man's thinking and way of life will also be noble. If there is no clear and noble objective of life, then he will not be able to concentrate on a single, fixed goal. Then he will be attracted and distracted toward various goals, his strength will dissipate, and he will not be able to achieve a concrete gain. So it is clear that the goal of life is crucial for man. After choosing a goal, man invests all his physical and spiritual energies to achieve it.

Necessary Characteristics of a Just Collective Goal

We have to be clear on a basic question before proceeding further. The question is, "what do we mean by the goal of a civilization, and what is the difference between the goal of an individual and of a civilization?" It is obvious that when we use the word *civilization*, we have in mind a group of people or a nation, and its way of life, and the goal of a civilization means the goal of all those people who belong to a particular civilization. A man may have a goal for his individual life, but being a part of a civilization, he has to avoid the clash between his individual goal and the collective goal of his civilization, because if there is a clash between the two goals, and each individual marches in a different direction, then the whole national body will be torn into separate pieces. To avoid this kind of clash, a civilization must have a natural and practical goal of life that all individuals can adopt as their own goal, and that all can struggle jointly to achieve it.

This discussion logically raises two further questions. Without finding a satisfactory answer to these questions,

proceeding further would not help to understand further discussion on the subject. The first question is: What kind of goal is suitable to human nature? The second question is: Do the goals which civilizations present to man conform with human nature, and can he choose it as his natural goal?

The Natural Goal of Man

Now we take the first question. What is the natural goal? If you present this question to people, you will get different answers. Whatever goals they declare, they are not goals, they are means to achieve the goals. The common goal of people is welfare and peace of mind. Different people belong to different groups but their struggle is for one goal of prosperity, security, peace, and contentment. So we can say that this goal can be called a natural goal.

A Critical Analysis of Two Collective Goals

Different civilizations of the world have presented different goals. If we go into detail, we will find many differences between them and it will not be possible to cover all of them here. However we can divide them into two basic categories:

1. Civilizations under the first category are not based on any religious or spiritual concept. The goal of these civilizations is social or communal superiority, and it contains different ingredients, the important ones are given below:
    a. Political domination (Monarchy)
    b. Economic domination through conquering lands or through trade (capitalism/colonialism)
    c. Cultural domination through science and technology or through grandeur and pomp of their social life (imperialism)

At first glance, you may not be able to note the clash between the national goal and the goal of an individual. Superficially they look alike. Once the collective goal is established, individuals usually adopt it, because of the apparent conformity between both goals. The collective goals usually hold great attraction and individuals merge their own

goals in them, but on a critical analysis of individual and collective goals one finds them mutually contradictory. It is obvious that there are many nations in the world, who are struggling to achieve superiority and dominance over others. This competition creates conflicts and even leads to wars, thus disturbing the peace and harmony in the world. The conflicts between nations arise at all levels, political, economic, and cultural, and they create chaos and upheaval in the world. This can be seen in the Western countries. Hypothetically, you may assume that there is only one nation, which is struggling to be superior and dominant, and finally succeeds in its pursuit. Despite his nation's success, an individual will not be satisfied. His own nation's pursuit of ascendancy and dominance not only initiates a competition among nations, but also instigates a struggle between individuals. They strive to keep themselves ahead of others, to obtain wealth and power. This lust for worldly gains creates selfishness in them and a tendency toward achieving their goals at any cost, neglecting others' rights, even causing damage to them. These ambitious can never be content and will have an insatiable urge for more. They will turn their markets and homes into a battlefield, and despite having power and wealth in abundance they will never attain peace, happiness, and tranquillity. It is an indisputable fact that mere material things cannot satisfy and make man happy. Man has a soul and needs something spiritual too. Animals are satisfied with physical provisions, but man is not merely an animal. If it is true that man is more than an animal, then this also must be true that man cannot be satisfied with the things, which appease only his animalistic desires.

2. The civilizations based on religion and spiritual values generally hold salvation as their goal. No doubt, this goal may contain a spiritual element that gives man some comfort and peace. It is also true that salvation can be made a goal for a whole nation as well as for an individual, but after critically examining it, we have to conclude that this goal is not worthy to become a true goal because of the following reasons.

First: The goal of salvation has a latent element of selfishness. This element weakens the collective body of men and strengthens the sense of individuality. If a man by performing some special acts and deeds achieves salvation, why should he want to become a part of the collective body and work with it? He will find no incentive to join a collective body of men. As a matter of fact individuality, in its essential nature, is totally against the collective life of a civilization.

Second: Salvation is deeply related to the method through which it is achieved. Ideals and means are closely related to each other. If the method is wrong the goal becomes wrong. The right goal needs right method. For example, some religions suggest monastic way of life as a way for salvation. According to these religions, salvation cannot be made a goal for individuals nor for their collective life. The believers and preachers of these religions had nothing to offer, but to separate religion from mundane affairs. Worldly people were shown a middle path for their salvation through the service of ecclesiastical luminaries, or through rites for personal atonement. The result of this approach was that this goal could not last long as a common goal for individuals and their collective body. Having no practical value, it lost its importance except for a few individuals. At last, people abandoned this goal and adopted materialistic goals.

On the other hand, those religions that linked salvation to the propitiation of various deities lost the commonality of their goal, because different people worshipped different deities. So a common goal could not be attained, while the commonality of a goal keeps the followers of a civilization united. Because of this, whenever the followers of these religions had a desire to progress in the way of prosperity and unity, they needed some other goal.

Some other religions do not address mankind as a whole. They address a particular race. To them salvation meant the salvation of a special race or nation. This goal may prove to be attractive in the early stages of a civilization but when the followers evolve and develop in their thinking, they reject the

goal prescribed by their religion and embrace some other goal, because the ideal of salvation of a particular race does not appeal to their intellect. And also because a man of good nature refuses to accept a goal that is based on selfishness, and which keeps salvation reserved for a particular race or nation.

The goal of salvation, spiritually and ethically, may be superlatively pure, but in a mundane sense it lacks the impulse that may spur a whole nation to strive for a higher position of progress and prosperity. This is the reason that no nation has adopted this ideal as its collective goal.

The goal of salvation has always been an individual goal, especially among the nations whose religion presented to them "salvation" as their only goal.

Because of these reasons, the goal of salvation, mundanely as well spiritually, proved not to be right and acceptable to human reason.

Now we are in a position to examine the goal of Islamic civilization and its characteristics that make it a rightful goal.

The Characteristics of Islamic Civilization

It is necessary to understand a basic point before opening the debate on the subject that there is a very strong relation between the goal of life and the concept of life. Whatever concept we have about worldly life and about our status in the world and the status of the world itself greatly influences our determining the goal of life.

If we believe that the world is a grazing pasture and the short period of life is meant for eating, drinking, and enjoying worldly pleasures, naturally this savage concept will give us a subhuman goal; and consequently, we will struggle to collect and provide things that satisfy our lust for sensual pleasures.

Quite contrary to this, if we believe that we are sinners by birth and guilty by nature, then we would see the world as a prison and a house of torture, where we have been sent to suffer punishment for being sinners by birth. Naturally, this concept will create a strong desire to get rid of this torment, so we will choose 'salvation' as our goal of life, but if we do not

take the world as a pasture or a house of torment and also if we do not think that we are animals or sinners, but instead, if we have a better concept about the world, and think that we are higher than a culprit or a beast, then naturally we will try to find a loftier goal than the goal of worldly pleasures and salvation. We will shun any lower goal of life.

If you ponder over the above point of view, you will find that the goal of life presented by Islam is a loftier goal, and is worthy to be chosen. Now let us see what goal Islam presents. Islam declares that man is the viceroy of God on this planet. This declaration about the status of man on the earth naturally gives a loftier goal to his life. And that is, to seek the pleasure of his Master. What should be the goal of life for a slave? It is quite natural that a slave must be obedient, loyal, and honest to his Master. A slave's aim and intention should be "Seeking the pleasure of his Master."

If his final goal is to get some material gains such as wealth, high status, and power, for these gains he shows his loyalty, and tries his best to be an obedient and honest servant; if he does not get these things from his Master, he turns his back on Him. What opinion will you have about this kind of subordinate? Would you call him sincere or a hypocrite? Certainly you would call him disloyal and untrustworthy. The sincere servant is the person who seeks the pleasure of his Master, whether he is rewarded or not. He knows that his Master is very kind, generous and merciful to His loyal slaves and bestows His bounties on them in abundance. But the vassal's loyalty is not for material gains, it is only for the pleasure of his Master. If his Master grants him any honour and reward, he becomes thankful to Him. Whatever his Master gives to him, he accepts with deep gratitude as an extra benefit, and the pleasure of his Master is his ultimate goal.

The relation between a human being and God, the Creator, is like the relation between the Master and the slave. If this is true, the goal for man's life must be to seek the pleasure of God by being obedient and loyal to Him.

Islam presents this same goal to mankind. Human nature and reason also accept it as a natural and reasonable goal. The Qur'an mentions it again and again to instil it in man's mind deeply. The Qur'an rejects all other goals emphatically.

> Say, "Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for Allah, The Cherisher of the worlds, no partner has He: This am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit to His Will." (Al-An'am – 6:162–163)

> Allah has purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the garden (of Paradise): They fight in His cause and slay and are slain: A promise binding on Him in truth, through the Torah, the Gospel, and the Qur'an. (At-Tauba – 9:111)

> And there is the type of man who gives his life to earn the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is full of kindness to (his) devotees. (Al-Baqarah – 2:207)

> Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those who are with him are strong against unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other. You will see them bow and prostrate themselves (in prayers), seeking grace from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure. (Al-Fat-h – 48:29)

> This because they followed that which displeased Allah, and they hated Allah's good pleasure; so He made their deeds of no effect. (Muhammad – 47:28)

> There are among men some who serve Allah, as it were, on the verge: if good befalls them, they are, therewith, well content; but if a trial comes to them, they turn on their faces: they lose both this world and the Hereafter: that is indeed the manifest loss. (Al-Hajj – 22:11)

It has been explained in the chapter Al-Baqarah that charity that is given just for show or to burden someone with obligation goes waste. The Qur'an says,

> O you who believe! Cancel not your charity by reminders of your generosity or by injury-like those who spend their wealth to be seen of men but believe neither in Allah nor in

the Last Day. They are in parable like a hard, barren rock, on which is a little soil: on it falls heavy rain, which leaves it (just) a bare stone. They will be able to do nothing with anything they have earned. And Allah guides not those who reject faith. And the likeness of those who spend their wealth seeking to please Allah and to strengthen their souls, is as a garden, high and fertile: heavy rain falls on it but makes it yield a double increase of harvest, and if it receives not heavy rain, light moisture suffices it, Allah sees well whatever you do. (Al-Baqarah – 2:264–265)

Whatever of good you give benefits your own souls, and you shall only do so seeking the "Face" of Allah. (Al-Baqarah – 2:272)

Those who patiently persevere, seeking the countenance of their Lord; establish regular prayers; spend out of (the gifts) We have bestowed for their sustenance, secretly and openly; and turn off evil with good; for such there is the final attainment of the (eternal) Home. (Ar-Ra'd – 13:22)

Therefore do I warn you of a fire blazing fiercely. (Al-Lail – 92:14)

But those most devoted to Allah shall be removed far from it, those who spend their wealth for increase in self-purification, and have in their minds no favour from anyone for which a reward is expected in return, but only the desire to seek for the Countenance of their Lord Most High, and soon will they attain (complete) satisfaction. (Al-Lail – 92:17–21)

So give what is due to kindred, the needy, and the wayfarer, that is the best for those who seek the Countenance, of Allah, and it is they who will prosper. (Ar-Rum – 30:38)

That which you give in usury in order that it may increase on other people's property has no increase with Allah: But that which you give for charity, seeking the Countenance of Allah, (will increase): it is these who will get a recompense multiplied. (Ar-Rum – 30:39)

> And they feed, for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive (saying), "We feed you for the sake of Allah alone; no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks. We only fear a Day of frowning and distress from the side of our Lord." But Allah will deliver them from the evil of that day, and will shed over them brightness and a (blissful) joy. (Al-Insan – 76)

> Truly Allah loves those who fight in His cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure. (As-Saff – 61:4)

> Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who reject Faith fight in the cause of evil (Tagut). (An-Nisaa – 4:76)

The Messenger of God Muhammad (peace be upon him), who had unique command of language, condensed the whole concept into a phrase of a few words. He said, "Allah (SWT) accepts only that deed which has been performed purely for seeking His pleasure."

This discussion makes it clear that Islam rejects goals oriented to material gains. It suggests "seeking the pleasure of God" as the only and ultimate goal for man's life.

Now we can easily find the characteristics of this goal that make it significant and the best of all goals.

The Harmony Between Natural and Intellectual Goals

The Islamic concept of the universe is not merely a notion, it is the firm belief that God is the only Ruler of this vast universe; all the creatures living in this universe are his slaves and subjects, dependent on Him, and they prostrate to Him. The Qur'an says, "To Him belongs every being that is in the heavens and on earth; all are devoutly obedient to Him" (Ar-Rum – 30:26).

All movements, small or big, all over the universe take place only under His sanctions. The Qur'an says, "The command rests with none but Allah" (Al-An'am – 6:57).

All existing things of the universe, ultimately, have to return to Him. He is the only refuge to all. The Qur'an says,

"But to Allah do all questions go back (for decision)" (Al-Baqarah – 2:210).

The literal meaning of *Islam* is to obey and surrender to the Will of God. Each and every particle of this universe in essence follows this principle. The Qur'an says,

> Do they seek for other than the religion of Allah? While all creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willing or unwilling, bowed to His will (accepted Islam). And to Him shall they all be brought back. (Al-i-Imran – 3:83)

This law of obedience is universal and absolute. There is no exception. Everything is bound by this unchangeable law, even man, by his very nature, is bound to it. The Qur'an says,

> So set you your face truly to the religion being upright. The nature in which Allah has made mankind; no change (there is) to the work (wrought) by Allah; that is the true religion; but most among mankind know not. (Ar-Rum – 30:30)

According to the Qur'anic concept, the innate goal of all creatures, including man, is to please God. But man, being an intellectual creature, has to get full knowledge about the natural goal and make it his intellectual goal as well; in this way he will enjoy a total harmony between his goal and the goal of the whole universe, then there will be no conflict between him and nature. He will not be merely a camp follower; he will be the leader of a caravan, guiding it to its destination. Contrary to this, if he does not realize the leader's role in the universe, and strays to the opposite direction, against the will and intention of the whole caravan, he may pursue his own direction amiss because, being a part of the caravan, he is bound to reach its destination against his will and without preparation.

The Gravitation of the Islamic System

As we have explained in the lines above, the centre or axis of the Islamic system is God. The whole system works and moves around Him. Whatever the system has in it, intention, belief, worship, and guidance for worldly affairs, all are

pointed toward God. Each unit of this system is strongly bound to the gravitational force of God. The name of the system, "Islam," manifests this concept very well; the term means to bow down and to obey. The followers of the system have to surrender before the Will of God. The Qur'an says,

> Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Alllah, does good, and follows the way of Abraham, the upright? (An-Nisaa – 4:125)

> Whoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good has grasped indeed the firmest handhold. (Luqman – 31:22)

The meaning can be better understood from the great sacrifice of Abraham and his son Ismael (Allah's blessing be on them). The son says, "O father do whatever has been commanded by Allah." And he puts down his head to be sacrificed, and the father is ready to sacrifice his son, for the sake of Allah (SWT). The action of bowing down to Allah's will by both father and son has been called in the Qur'an "Islam" which means obedience. Again the Qur'an says, "So when they had both submitted (to Allah) and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice)" (As-Saffat – 37:103).

On the basis of Islam, "the submission," each action of man should be for the pleasure of Allah (SWT). If *salat* (prayer) is not for the sake of Allah (SWT), it is nothing but an exercise of genuflexion. If fasting is not for the pleasure of Allah (SWT), it is merely a form of starvation. If spending is in the way of Allah (SWT), it is a pure charity, otherwise it is merely squandering. If fighting is purely for Allah's sake and in His way, then it is the best kind of worship, otherwise it is violent bloodshed, without justice. The same principle is to be applied to all other actions of man. If they are for the sake of Allah (SWT) and according to the dictates of Islam, they will be marked good and rewardable, otherwise they are bootless. If man abstains from the things prohibited, purely for the sake of Allah (SWT), then his abstinence will be beneficial to him, otherwise it will be useless, and he will receive no reward.

The seeking of Allah's pleasure is the core of the Islamic system and the foundation of Islamic civilization. Islam presents it as a goal of life to man. It has a very strong magnetic and gravitational power that attracts and assembles all the elements of the Islamic System around one central force and that is God and His pleasure. It is like the solar system in our galaxy.

Unity of Thought and Action

As it has been explained above, the seeking of God's pleasure is the foundation of Islamic civilization and the ultimate goal of a believer's life. This goal, on the one hand, disciplines and strengthens the religious system and, on the other, saves the believers from confusion, and directs all of their intentions, beliefs, thoughts, and actions toward one centre, and that is the pleasure of God. Islam declares it the highest goal, one that is matchless in its sublimity.

A person whose goal of life is merely satisfaction of materialistic and sensual desires or achieving some psychic aims will never be satisfied, because with the passing of time he will become more matured and make some new inventions and discoveries, which may lead him to newer goals. It is quite natural that man cannot be content with the things he had in the early stages of life. At higher stages he will hanker after some other more advanced things. Consequently the materialistic person's whole life will be spent in changing his goals and contracting some new ideals. He will not be able to concentrate on a single goal. He will not have a principal ideology that could organize his thoughts and enable him to spend his mental and physical abilities to achieve his goal. The goal presented by Islam is the only goal that is suitable for all stages of intellectual and academic progress, and it will never become obsolete in any higher stage of development. God is above everyone else, and the greatest. Despite His greatness, He is with the lowest, and with the highest equally. It is we who are not equal in our knowledge about Him.

Organising the Collective Life of Humanity

The goal of seeking the pleasure of God has universality in it. A group, a nation, even the whole humanity can make it its goal. It is absolutely free from selfishness. Selfishness that causes division and conflict among people. It splits the whole humanity into groups, sections, and nations, and makes them fight against each other. It creates enmity among the individuals and groups. It sows seeds of jealousy, malice, and hatred in their hearts.

On the contrary, the Islamic goal turns man toward God, Who is present all the time, everywhere, among the whole humanity, and in the universe. When man turns toward God, he finds harmony in all of his struggles, and instead of clash and conflict there will be cooperation, compassion, and brotherhood.

Selfishness plays havoc in human society. In the field of worldly goals, you will find no true cooperation and assistance between two persons. Even among blood relations like brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, enmity may develop. Despite being partners in a material way, they will fight against each other so fiercely that even close blood relations will fall apart. They will not even hesitate to kill a near and dear one for small material gains. The main factor behind such behaviour is selfishness. The basic ingredient of all material goals is selfishness.

On the contrary, if the goal is to seek the pleasure of God, then no selfishness, jealousy, and enmity will arise among the people. This is the highest goal; toward it, millions of people can march concurrently, helping each other, without killing and hurting anyone. The weak will get help from the strong. People will be ready to sacrifice their money, time, and even their life for others. All of this will be only to seek the pleasure of God.

It is a fact that the Islamic concept and goal wipes out all types of prejudices based on race, colour, language, or country. It provides a firm foundation to build a universal brotherhood. While organizing the collective life of human society, it also

preserves the individuality of a person in such a way that he becomes an integral part of the universal brotherhood.

All Human Aims May Be Achieved Under This Highest Goal

The other characteristic of the Islamic goal is that all aims, individual as well as collective, can be achieved under this highest goal. The Qur'an has mentioned all those things which man will have as a reward for his struggle in seeking the pleasure of God. The main thing which man wants to achieve is peace of mind. The Qur'an says that by turning toward God man will obtain the peace of mind.

> Nay, whoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good, he will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. (Al-Baqarah – 2:112)

> Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction. (Ar-Ra'd – 13:28)

The other thing which man desires is prosperity and a life full of peace and harmony. The Qur'an says: belief in God and fear of His anger, and to be good and pious will certainly bring peace to one's life.

> If the people of the towns had but believed and feared Allah, We should indeed have opened out to them (all kinds of) blessings from heaven and earth. (Al-A'raf – 7:96)

> Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and is a believer, verily, to him We will give a life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions. (An-Nahl – 16:97)

The other thing which is very dear to man is the ruling power and dominating position. The Qur'an says: by being devoted to God, you will be able to have it.

> As to those who turn (for friendship) to Allah, His Messenger, and the believers, it is the party of Allah that must certainly triumph. (Al-Maidah – 5:56)

> Before this We wrote in the Psalms, after the message (given to Moses): "My servants the righteous shall inherit the earth." (Al-Anbiyaa – 21:105)

> Allah has promised to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as he granted to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived) to one of security and peace. (An-Nur – 24:55)

In the same way, man desires salvation in the Hereafter. The Qur'an says the only way of having it is to achieve the pleasure of God.

> The righteous soul will be welcomed with this greeting: "O (you) soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction, come back to your Lord well pleased (yourself) and well pleasing unto Him!" (Al-Fajr – 89:27–28)

This makes clear that Islam pays no attention to other goals implied in some other ways of life. Islam focuses only on the ideal that, if achieved, man will naturally reach all other lawful, worldly, and spiritual goals. A Muslim does not like to spend even a second of his time, or even a small particle of his energy, to achieve inferior and unlawful goals. His eyes will all the time be fixed on the ideal which is more valuable to him than the whole universe and its wealth. When he achieves the highest goal, he certainly will get all the things which are lower than it; like the person who reaches the highest story of a building, all the lower stories naturally come under his feet.

The Best Incentive for Being Pious and Good

The Islamic goal is the only noble and pure goal that can invoke and inspire humans to reach the highest standard of goodness and piety: the standard prescribed by Islam.

Many people say that goodness should be achieved only for

the sake of goodness, and evil should be shunned because of evil; but they do not know the real meaning of the words they utter. Goodness for the sake of goodness means, 'you should not think about the benefits that goodness brings to you, you have to choose goodness as your goal in life, without knowing its benefits.' In the same way, you should not take notice of the harm which evil brings with it. You have to abstain from it without knowing its harmful effects. In other words, evil in its own self is such a bad thing that you have to abstain from it without noticing its harm. There is no pure and abstract goodness in the world that is void of all benefits. We can say the same thing about evil. The truth is that benefits and harm give the concept of goodness and badness. This is human nature; the things which hurt a man, he calls bad, even though they may have some benefits in them. If you perform a particular action, void of benefits and harm, then it is a mere movement, and we will not be able to say whether it is good or bad. It is true that if someone reaches the highest grade of intellect, he might be able to separate the goodness from its benefits and badness from its harm and make abstract goodness as his goal of life. But this is a utopia created by philosophers; even great thinkers of today and the past seem unable to achieve this. Then think about the common people, who have only an average intellect: How can they make the same abstract goodness their goal of life and find their utopia.

This discussion shows that you cannot separate the concept of goodness and evil from benefits and harm. Goodness in its abstract sense cannot be made a goal until it has some benefits in it. Likewise, evil also cannot be abhorred until its harm is seen. Now, if we decide that sincerity should be the motive of goodness and goodness should be the basis of the moral code, then we would have a criterion to judge the good and evil of a deed. If any action proves good on this criterion, the performer will believe that in spite of material losses his deed is good and full of benefits. In the same way if any action is proved harmful according to the criteria, it will be called bad and undesirable, and the performer will believe that in spite of

material gains, he is in loss. Islam has adopted the same method by making the pleasure of God its only criteria. If God is pleased at an action, it will be counted good and the performer, despite losing his wealth, fame, or even his life, believes that he is a gainer; though he has lost everything, he has gained the pleasure of God. On the contrary, a wicked man, in spite of getting material gains, is always afraid of total loss because he feels that God is not pleased with him. The belief that the pleasure of God is the real success and His displeasure is utter failure is the only incentive that is pure and void of any materialistic temptations. It makes humans selfless and pious. To this extent, we have given an elaborate explanation of two things: first, the goal of life ordained by Islam is the best, and second, why this goal is the best. Now we will discuss how this goal made the Islamic civilization a unique civilization and what specific characteristics it has given to Islamic civilizations.

How Goals Affect the Methods?

It has already been said how important the selection of a goal and methods to achieve it are. The right method to achieve a goal is essential. People are of four kinds. One travels and walks on roads but has no final destination. What will people say about such a person? Will they not think him to be a lunatic? The second person is one who has a fixed goal but does not select a right way to reach the goal; he walks in different ways and changes them frequently. Will you not think of such a person as silly? The third person is one who walks toward the direction that is opposite to his goal. Will he not be thought of as stupid? The fourth example is of a person who selects his goal wisely, then chooses the shortest and easiest way to reach the goal. Will he not be called wise and practical?

In the light of this discussion, we arrive at the conclusion that if you would like to be successful in your life, you have to choose the best goal and find out the shortest and the easiest way to the goal. Then spend all your intellectual, physical and material energies to reach the goal. Also you must turn your

back on all other ways that do not lead to your chosen goal. This is the method that is naturally adopted by anyone who has common sense. To reject the ways that do not lead to the goal and to pick the way that leads to the goal is the basic condition for success. The only thing debatable is the question about the best way to reach the final destination. The traveller, the student, the merchant all use the same method. A wise student selects the subject for his studies that he likes best. A traveller walks on the way that goes straight to his destination and is the shortest. A wise merchant invests his money in the business which is most suitable and profitable to him, and rejects all other branches of business because he does not want to spend his capital, time, and energy in various branches of trade in which he sees more losses than gains. He wants to concentrate all his energies on a single trade to achieve success.

This method is applicable to all spheres of life as it can be applied to a part of life. In other words, if man does not have any goal for his life, then he would be free to do whatever he desires. He would not differentiate between good and bad. He would be free to fulfil his desires by any means he likes.

If, due to some external factors, he is compelled to follow a particular rule and order, even then he would not be able to discipline his life because he has no inner urge to organize himself for achieving a particular goal in a right way. It is obvious that if a man has a goal of life and it is a spiritual and intellectual goal, then naturally he will choose the best way that may lead him to the goal. Anybody who has some amount of wisdom will not choose the ways which will make him go astray and waste his time and energy. His line of action will be quite different from the one who has no lofty goal and who leads an animal's life, fulfilling his sensual desires through any available way, good or bad. The same thing can be applied to collective life. In the beginning of a civilization you may not expect a nation to be able to have lofty aims for its social life. But when it reaches the higher stages of development and is able to have a goal for its national life, based on its collective intellect and wisdom, then it has to organize the whole national

life and has to shape its doctrines, concepts, ways of dealings, and ethics for social and economic life, which should be in harmony with the goal of the national life and its civilization. When the civilization adopts a system, naturally it will seek to preserve it. Without strict discipline, no civilization can keep itself alive; its existence depends on the question of how far its followers follow it, in theory as well as in practice. It is obvious that when the followers stop following their own civilization and start following other civilizations, foreign ideals, customs, and fashions, then no one can save it from its decline and devastation. Therefore it is the right of a civilization to demand that its followers be under the control of a strict discipline and kept away from other civilizations. Indeed, the critics have the right to criticize a civilization, its goals and methods of achieving them, and whether its discipline is workable or not, but they do not have the right to say that a civilization can't demand that its followers obey its discipline strictly. It should be accepted that the ways and the methods cannot be separated from its aim and goal. Changing goals means changing methods. With the acceptance of this basis, you must accept the fact that different civilizations with their different goals must have different disciplines, doctrines and practices. It is possible that some aspects of a civilization have a resemblance to the aspects of other civilizations, but it does not mean that as a whole they are one or fully similar. From this basis two more logical principles emerge. The first is that you cannot say a particular system of a civilization can be the criterion for judging the system of another civilization. It is not justified to condemn a civilization that is not up to one's own particular standard and validate another one that duplicates the standard. The other thing is that you cannot thrust a system of doctrines and practices on other civilizations. Each civilization has its own character; the basic components of one civilization cannot be introduced into another civilization. This type of mixing is against the nature and basic principles of civilizations.

What Role a Goal Plays in the Building of an Islamic Civilization?

After understanding the above thesis, it will be easy to know the role of the goal in making an Islamic civilization a unique civilization. Through the previous discussion it has become clear that the goal of Islamic civilization is basically different from the goals of other civilizations. It has also been made clear that with the changing of the goal, the discipline, concepts, and practices also suffer a complete change. This is the reason that the Islamic civilization is quite different from all other civilizations in all respects, in its goals, methods, doctrines, disciplines, principles, and practices. It is possible that some components of the Islamic system are found in other systems or have resemblance to them. When a component of one system is introduced into another system, it loses its original characteristics and adopts some other qualities under the influence of a whole new system and its nature. It is obvious that when a whole system is different from another system, its components also will be different in their qualities, whether they resemble them in appearance or not.

As has been explained above, Islam has declared that a human is the viceroy of God in this world and the purpose of a human's life, ordained by Islam, is to achieve the pleasure of his Lord for Whom he has been made the viceroy. It is a fact that the goal of life governs a human's whole life and demands his time, wealth, and all other intellectual and physical abilities. He has to devote himself wholly to the goal of life. This goal involves him so much that he lives for the goal and dies for the goal. His friendship and his enmity, his dealings and relations, his economics and social life, all his skills and powers, and his days and nights, all are devoted and spent to achieve the final goal. The goal becomes his soul. It means that without the goal he is merely a dead body. It is quite clear that a man who has a goal in his life cannot live like a person who has no goal. The goal of achieving the pleasure of God turns a man into an active being, who keeps struggling all the time and lives for the sake of reaching the goal.

After prescribing the goal of life, Islam teaches man how to live in this world. Islam gives him a way of life and warns him that he should not waste his precious time and energies in other ways. Islam gives him a whole system of beliefs, doctrines and disciplines, and demands that he should not put his feet out of the circle of this system. Islam calls this system "the total obedience." Islam gives a name to this system and that is "Diin." It is an Arabic word used in the Qur'an meaning "obedience." The Qur'an says, "The religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will)" (Al-i-Imran – 3:19).

On the basis of "Diin", Islam draws a line between its followers and those who do not follow it. Islam calls the followers "Muslims" (obedient) and "Mu'minun" (believers) and those who do not believe in Islam are called "Kuffar" (those who reject). Islam eliminates all distinctions based on race, nation, language, land, and other things like them. It establishes that the only distinction is based on belief and disbelief. Anybody who follows this system enters into Islamic brotherhood, whether he lives in the East or the West, and Islam disowns the one who does not believe, and does not follow its system, whether he lives under the Shadow of Ka'bah's wall (the first house of worship on the Earth built by Abraham) (peace be upon him), or one whose flesh and bones have been built on dates of Makkah and water of *zam zam* (fountain at Ka'ba in Makkah giving water since Abraham's days of life thousands of years ago).

At the first stage, Islam makes a distinction based on belief and unbelief, then for practical life, Islam draws a line between (*halal*) permissible and (*haram*) prohibited The ways that are helpful for us in fulfilling our responsibilities, as viceregents of God, have been given the name "Ma'ruf" (permissible) and the things that hinder the performance of our duties as viceroy are called "Makrooh" (undesirable). The believer who respects these limits is called "muttaqi" (who refrains) and who breaks these limits is called "fasiq" (one who transgresses the limits). Within Islamic brotherhood the distinction of low and high is not based on wealth, race, social status, or colour, it is based on

"Taqwa" (fear of God and righteousness). The Qur'an says, "Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you" (Al-Hujurat – 49:13).

With this concept the Islamic civilization has quite a different way from the ways of other civilizations in all parts of human life, in its thoughts, ethics, economy, social life, culture, and governing system. The aim and goal of life prescribed by Islam is quite different from other civilizations. Islam deals differently with the world and what is in the world. In the same way, for achieving its goal, Islam prescribes a way that is totally different from the ways and methods of other civilizations. There are many ways of life and trends that are permissible in other civilizations, but Islam declares them undesirable and unlawful. They are appropriate to the concept of life of other civilizations and helpful in achieving their goals, but they do not suit the Islamic concept of life, and they might become a hindrance in achieving the goal of life that Islam prescribes. For example, fine arts are the soul of most civilizations, and artists who demonstrate extraordinary skill in any branch of fine arts become celebrities and heroes, while Islam declares some branches of fine arts undesirable and some of them unlawful. Some of them are permissible subject to some limits and restrictions. According to Islamic law, it is allowed to savour delicacies or tastes, and to enjoy the beauties of life but only with remembrance of Almighty God, so the believer can keep working for God's pleasure and fulfilling his duties as God's representative. However, when he crosses certain limits, and delicacies begin to dominate and diminish his sense of responsibility, the enjoyment and pleasures engross him so much that instead of worshiping the Creator, he begins to worship the beauty itself. The interest in fine arts makes him an addict of luxuries and lusts. The lust becomes so powerful that his reason loses control over him. He turns deaf to the cry of his conscience. He loses the ability to listen to the call of duty. This is the point where Islam draws the line of prohibition and undesirability. Islam's goal is not to create a Picasso, or an Elizabeth Taylor; instead, Islam wishes to create

characters like Abu Bakar Siddique, Umar Farooq, Ali Ibn Talib, Hussain Ibn Ali, Abuzar Ghifari (God be pleased with them) and Rabia Basari (God's blessing be upon her).

The same law can be applied to social life and culture in its different aspects, especially on relations between men and women, the rich and the poor, rulers and their subjects, and on interaction between different sections of human society. In all these respects Islam's ways are basically different from other civilizations. It is quite wrong to take other civilizations as the criteria for judging Islamic civilization.

Fundamental Thoughts and Beliefs

What Is Iman and Its Importance? We have already discussed the concept of life and the goal of life. Now we have to discuss the question: On what basis does Islam build the character of its followers?

Character and Its Intellectual Base

The mind and intellect are the source of instruction, and the controlling power over all of man's actions. Human mind has two conditions. The first is to be void of any particular thoughts, its door is open to all types of thoughts and man acts under the influence of a dominating thought. In other words, he is swept by a powerful wave of thoughts. Such a person is quite unpredictable, you cannot guess what he will be doing in a particular situation. He might act as an angel or as a monster. Humans who have such conditions of mind are labelled unstable in disposition. In contrast to this there are people who think in an organized way. Their minds are not like a road open for all. Thoughts against their beliefs and doctrines do not assail their minds, or, if they do, they are rejected immediately. It is easy to predict how these people will act in a particular situation; they are called men of character because they have a firm base of thought and they are constant in their way of thinking. They are not like dry leaves at the mercy of a powerful gust of wind.

The First Condition for an Organized Life

With this discussion it has become clear that thoughts and actions are deeply interlinked. They are the foundation of character building. The inconsistent thoughts and unorganized actions cannot build a trustworthy character. A strong character is always the product of firm beliefs, constant thoughts, and an organized way of thinking. The buzzing of adverse thoughts at the door of your mind is quite natural, but opening the door and letting them in depends on you. If you are weak in your beliefs and are not able to eschew the distractions, they will get hold of your mind. You might compromise with them and act against your own belief. This condition of mind will create a weak and untrustworthy character. For a strong character it is necessary to have a strong resisting power against adverse thoughts and temptations.

The Meaning of Faith

According to the terminology of the Qur'an, the intellectual basis of human character is called "Im'an." The root of this Arabic word is "Aman." The actual meaning of "Aman" is a condition of contentment and fearlessness. From the same root comes the word "Amanat" (trustworthiness), the opposite of it is the word "Khianat" (treachery). In other words "Amanat" is the quality that has no fear of "Khianat." The person who has the quality of "Amanat" is called "Ameen" and it is believed that he will not cheat. The obedient and mild-natured she-camel is called "amun," because there is no fear of rebellion from her. The word *Im'an* comes from the same root. It means that a particular belief, thought, or doctrine has been rooted so deep and strong in the mind and heart that there is no place for any adverse thought. When we talk of the weakness of "Im'an," it means that the mind is not fully convinced and satisfied about the truth of the belief. This weakness gives way to adverse thoughts and produces a weak character. On the contrary, when we talk of strong "Im'an", we mean that the character has a firm base, which may be called "trustworthiness" (Amanat). We cannot expect from such a

character any action inconsistent with belief. You can predict how a person with this character would act in a particular situation. You can trust that he will act according to the firm belief that has become the strong foundation of his thinking and action.

The Role of *Iman* in Building a Civilization

It is an accepted fact that a cohesive body cannot be formed with individuals who believe in different dogmas and ideologies, and have characters of various kinds. They will be like scattered stones on the ground. No doubt, each stone is strong but there is cohesion among them. On the contrary, if a single thought is rooted firmly in the minds and hearts of people as *Iman*, then the strong bond of *Iman* will forge them into a nation. In other words, when the scattered stones are assembled and cemented, they can form a formidable wall. In the same way a common belief as "Iman" brings the people together and creates in them a model character and uniformity in their thoughts and actions and finally turns them into a nation, a culture, and a civilization.

The Two Types of *Iman*

Now we have to study how "Iman" affects the different civilizations. Actually *Iman* is a religious term. However, here we are using this term in the sense of "basic concept." In this way, we may have two types of *Iman*. One religious "Iman" and the other, worldly "Iman." If a civilization is built on the religious "Iman" then the "Iman" will govern both the religious affairs and the worldly affairs. If a civilization is not built on religion then, the worldly "Iman" separates itself from the religious "Iman" so it loses control on both the individual and the national life.

Religious *Iman*

Religious "Iman" builds the character on a spiritual and moral basis. Here are a few examples of such bases. The first is faith in one or more gods with their particular attributes. The

second are the books accepted as inspired books. The third are religious leaders whose precepts and examples become the basis of beliefs and actions. These above-mentioned are three bases on which human character can be built spiritually and morally. The question is how far these beliefs can prove successful. We can find the answer to this question by examining the beliefs through a religious point of view or through the purely worldly point of view. Put aside the religious point of view, examine purely through the worldly point of view, it will become obvious that the success of such beliefs depends on two conditions. The first condition is whether those dogmas that a religion demands that its followers believe are acceptable to reason. The second is whether a faith and its doctrines have the strength to build a moral system of a higher standard, and whether its ethics are so pure and clean that they can prepare people for success in their worldly life. The first condition (dogmas should be acceptable to reason) is a must because, if beliefs are merely a bundle of fiction, or more superstitious than rational, they will find a place only in the minds of ignorant people. But this net of superstition will be torn apart, as soon as humanity advances in reason, education, and scientific knowledge. Then the whole system of ethics and spirituality on which an edifice of individual and national character had been built will be shaken. In support of this thesis, we can produce evidence from the beliefs presented by polytheistic religions about their deities, gods, and religious leaders. Feats and stories fabricated around them are not acceptable to reason. History shows that the nations that believe in such fictitious beliefs lose the strength to advance or to play a dominant role in the world. The fictitious thoughts and beliefs create such a bad effect on their minds that their best skills become dull, they lose courage in their feats, intensity in their determination, vastness in their vision, enlightenment in their minds, valour in their hearts, and at last they fall into the abyss of everlasting disgrace, misfortune, slavery, and oppression. On the contrary, the developed nations, with the advancement of knowledge and wisdom, start

losing faith in their deities and religious leaders. In the beginning, to keep their national system intact, they try to cling to their wrong beliefs, but gradually their repulsion to them becomes so intense that they totally abandon them. Only a small group of spiritual leaders keep themselves attached to the fictitious beliefs, while the whole nation comes under the dominance of the other type of faith (*Iman*) which we may call "The worldly Faith" (*Dunyavi-Iman*). It is obvious that the second condition also is necessary. The influence of beliefs that are unable to prepare their followers for success in worldly life remains limited to the spiritual and ethical sphere of life, and does not reach the people's worldly life. The result of this appears in two ways: either the nation that is encumbered with fictitious beliefs will lose its ability to advance, or else its progress will be only for a short period. It is sure that such a nation will soon free itself from fictitious beliefs, then the "religious faith" (*Dini-Iman*) will vacate its place in favour of "worldly faith" (*Dunyavi-Iman*) and when the nation becomes very busy, its worldly life, its worldly type of ethics and spirituality will reject the influence of religious faith (*Dini-Iman*).

It is not my intention to show flaws in any religion; rather I would like to discuss the beliefs of different religions in detail. When you study the religions deeply, you will understand very well how the beliefs of some religions slowed down advancement and blocked the way of development of their followers in their worldly life and how those beliefs could not keep pace with the advancement of knowledge and intellect. Another aspect also will come to your knowledge: the fact that so many nations were strong in their religious beliefs while they were declining in their worldly life. In contrast, when they were advancing and progressing in their worldly life, they deserted their religious beliefs. Quite contrary to this, Muslims were very strong in their beliefs when they were at their zenith of advancement in their worldly life. They became weak in their beliefs when they lagged behind in the way of progress and surrendered to the dominance of other nations. Today

Muslims wallow their worst decline and have also become weak in their beliefs, while they were very strong in their religious belief during the first 1200 years of their highest advancement.

Contrarily, the Christians of Europe and the Buddhists of Japan were staunch Christians and zealous Buddhists, respectively, when they were living in material decline, but they lost belief in their faith when they became developed nations. This is the great difference between Islamic beliefs and the beliefs of other religions. Any person who possesses some wisdom and insight into the matter may easily see this difference.

Worldly Beliefs

Now we have to look at worldly beliefs. Beliefs of this kind have no religious element in them. There is no God, no religious leader, no inspired book, and none of the kind of education that builds human character on a spiritual and ethical foundation. These worldly beliefs create idols. The concept of "Nation", the biggest among them, is worshiped by the people who live within particular geographic boundaries. All nations promote the idea that they are the master and controllers of their citizens' lives and properties. To serve it and to protect the nation is an incumbent duty and obligation. To sacrifice life in serving it and to spend in its way, whatever you have, is a great accomplishment. But it is not enough, the nationalists have to believe that their nation is never wrong, it is always right, and their nation is the rightful owner of the entire Earth. All the other countries of the world are their plundering ground. It is the duty of each citizen to hoist the flag of his nation all over the world. The other deity is the "law." They themselves are its maker and also its worshiper, and it is the worship which binds them together. The third idol is their own self, whose nourishment and fulfilment of needs and desires is the foremost priority. The fourth deity is knowledge by whose guidance they march on the way of progress toward their goals.

No doubt, these beliefs are beneficial to some extent in

worldly life. We put aside the question, "what value have these beliefs on the scale of truth?" And even seeing the matter from purely worldly points of view, we can say that the benefits of these beliefs are neither real nor lasting. The glaring defect is that they have no element of spirituality and morality in them. The result of this is that when the hold of religion is loosened on society, the door of immorality opens widely. It is not within the jurisdiction of law to change the hearts of people and fill them with moral sense and to create a model of good behaviour; neither does the law have power to protect the morals in people's corporate life. The effectiveness of law and its circle of action are limited. Especially, man-made law is weaker because to loosen and tighten the grip of law is itself in the hands of the people. With the increase of the desire for freedom in action, the old moral bindings become unbearable and when the majority of people start opposing any of the moral bindings that seems a barrier in the way of freedom of action that is removed. This is the beginning of moral downfall. The moral downfall is the worst thing, whose fatal effects cannot be stopped by the authority of government, or abundance of wealth, or even by the vast resources of power, and not by knowledge either. It is like an evil, or the termite, which eats from inside and pulls down the whole structure. Besides all this, the evils of being nationalist are so obvious that there is no need of mentioning them in detail. Now they are not merely an object of speculation, they are observed clearly and in fact we are looking at them with our own open eyes. We see how a great civilization is about to fall because of these evils and the whole world is trembling with the fear of dire consequences, which seem sure to become a reality in the future.

A Few Universal Principles

Out of all this discussion, a few universal principles can be derived. Before proceeding further, it is better to understand them properly with their just sequence.

1. The organized deeds of a human depend on his

determined character. Without a solid and strong character, the practical life of man is nothing but chaos of fickleness and untrustworthiness.

2. The character is built on those conceptions that are rooted so deep in man's mind that all his practical powers work under their influence. Such concepts are given a name by us as "Imaniat."
3. The soundness and weakness of human character, its strength, goodness and badness all depend on fundamental concepts. If the concepts are wrong the character goes wrong, if the concepts are right the character is developed in the right direction. If fundamental concepts (we call them "imaniat") are strong, the character will also be strong; otherwise the whole thing will be upside down. To make a human's life an organized life, it is necessary to build his character on a sound concept and firm faith.
4. "Imaniat" is an essential need to organize scattered people into a united group, party, or nation. "Imaniat" should not be limited to people's individual lives. "Imaniat" should be a common and fundamental concept of a group or a nation. As a common and fundamental ideology or concept it is a basic need of any civilization and culture. The interest of culture is not in limiting the faith to individual life, its interest lies in extending the faith to the whole national life.
5. When "Imaniat" creates a special model of national character, then a civilization is established and a peculiar shape of it takes place. Now it has become clear that the fundamental concepts play an important role in creating and strengthening the national character.
6. In a nation whose fundamental concepts are based on spiritual beliefs, its religion and civilization are unified. Contrary to this, if its fundamental concepts are based on purely worldly things, then its civilization severs from its religion, and religion loses its hold on individual and national life.

7. When religion does not have any control over the civilization, downfall swamps to the morals of the nation, which results in its total ruin.
8. Keeping the civilization under the influence of religion depends on the religion's spiritual beliefs. But these beliefs should be able to go along with the advancement of reason from the lower to the higher plane. They also should be able to shape the human's character in such a way that the individual could be a highly religious as well as a worldly person simultaneously. In other words, his worldliness should match his religiosity and his religiosity should parallel his worldliness.
9. Any nation whose faith and civilization both are one, its belief will not be merely religious belief, it will be the same as its worldly belief. The weakness in belief will be destructive to its religion as well as to its civilization; it will be ruinous for its worldly life as well as religious life. Keeping in view these basic principles, we have to look critically at the stand point of Islam about 'Iman.'

After noting these points about "Iman", we should address the question: What importance does it have in building the individual character? What basic role does "Iman" play in erecting the edifice of civilization? We will now address the things Islam has invited the people to believe in. How far do Islamic beliefs prove to be right and perfect on the rational plane? What status has belief in Islam's whole system? What effects does belief imprint on man's individual character and his national character?

Islamic Beliefs

The Qur'an has discussed the beliefs in so much detail that it has left no room for differences of opinion about them. But, there are some misunderstandings in the minds of those people who could not make themselves familiar with the style of the expression of the Qur'an or could not go through the whole contents of the Qur'an. The Qur'an has a special style, in some places it refers to all the beliefs together, and in some places it

just mentions a few of them, or one of them, with special emphasis.

Being unacquainted with the Qur'anic style, some people wrongly thought that the whole fabric of the "Qur'anic beliefs" could be truncated into fragments. In other words, they thought that people had the option to believe in all Qur'anic beliefs, or in any one of them, or some of them. That even if they denied one of them, the salvation and success could be achieved in the Hereafter. However, the Qur'an absolutely decrees that one has to believe in all the "beliefs" together. The Qur'an does not allow the fragmentation of the whole body of its "beliefs". The Qur'anic beliefs together make one whole body that is not divisible. This should be accepted as a whole package or rejected as a whole. If you deny one, you are denying the whole.

The Qur'an says, "In the case of those who say: 'our Lord is Allah,' and further stand straight and steadfast the angels descend on them" (Hama Assajda or Fussilat – 41:30). In this verse, belief in God (Allah) has been mentioned and on that basis, good tidings of success in the Hereafter has been given. In other places, the belief in God is bracketed with the belief in the Hereafter. The Qur'an says, "Any who believe in Allah and the last day and work righteousness shall have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve" (Al-Baqarah – 2:62).

The same contents are found in chapters Al-i-Imran (12), Al-Maidah (10), and Ar-Rad (3). In another place in the chapter Al-i-Imran people have been called to believe in God, and in His messengers. "So believe in Allah and his messenger; and if you believe and do right, you have a great reward without measure" (Al-i-Imran – 3:179).

The same theme has been repeated in chapter Al-Hadid (section 4). In another place the Qur'an declares that only they are believers who believe in God and in his last messenger, Muhammad (peace be upon him).

> Only those are believers who believe in Allah and His messenger, when they are with him on a matter requiring

> collective action they do not depart until they have asked for his leave. (An-Nur – 24:62)

The same content appears in chapters Muhammad and Al-Fath. In other places four beliefs have been mentioned. The four beliefs are God, His Books, Qur'an, and the Day of Judgment. "And the believers, believe in what has been revealed to you and believe in Allah and in the Last Day" (An-Nisaa – 4:162).

In other places, the Qur'an declares that the denial of God, His angels, His messengers and the Qur'an is infidelity and transgression.

> Whoever is an enemy to God and His angels and prophets, to Gabriel and Michael. Lo! Allah is an enemy to those who reject faith. We have sent down to you manifest signs (ayat) and none reject them but those who are perverse. (Al-Baqarah – 2:98)

In another place, the Qur'an calls those men believers who believe in God, angels, books of Allah, messengers, and the Qur'an. "The messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord as do the men of faith; each believes in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers" (Al-Baqarah – 2:255).

In another place, it has been said that belief has five elements:

1. The belief in God
2. The Hereafter
3. Angels
4. Books of God
5. His messengers

"But it is righteousness to believe in Allah and the last day, and the angels, and the book, and the messengers, such are the people of truth, the God fearing" (Al-Baqarah – 2:177).

In the chapter An-Nisa along with mentioning the above five beliefs, it has been emphasized that to believe in the Qur'an and the messenger of God Muhammad (peace be upon him) is essential.

At other places, the emphasis is on the life hereafter and its

denial has been called ruination. "Lost indeed are they who treat it as a falsehood that they must meet Allah" (Al-An'am – 6:31).

The same point is repeated in chapters Al-Araf (7), Yunus (l), Al-Furqan (2), Ar-Rad (1), and As-Saffat (1). At other places, it has been declared that denial of the other life and of Allah's books will invite severe torment. "For that they used not to look for any account (for their deeds) but they (impudently) treated our signs as false" (An-Nabaa – 78:27–28).

On a third occasion the Qur'an has emphasized the beliefs in the Hereafter and God's books. "And who believe in the revelation sent to you, and sent before your time and have the assurance of the Hereafter, they are on true guidance from their Lord and it is these who will prosper" (Al-Baqarah – 2:4–5).

In a fourth place it has been admonished that the denial of the Day of Judgment and God's books will make all deeds and actions unavailing. The man who denies these beliefs will be thrown into the Hell. The belief in the books of God has been mentioned again and again, as in the Torah (Old Testament), the Injil (New Testament, Gospel), Zabur (The Psalms of David), Suhuf Ibrahim (Scrolls of Abraham) – all have been clearly named as books of Allah. But at scores of places it has been clarified that to believe in these books is not enough. The belief in the last book of God, the Qur'an, is also necessary. If a man believes in all the books of God, except the Qur'an, is an unbeliever, in the same way as a man who does not believe in all the books of Allah is an unbeliever. See chapter Al-Baqarah (sections 11, 12, 14, 16) and chapter Al-Nisaa (section 7), Al-Maidah (sections 2, 10), Ar-Rad (section 3), Al-Ankaboot (section 5), Az-Zumar (section 4). Not only this, one must believe in all the books of God and their whole content. If a man believes in some part of God's books and rejects some other parts of these books, he will also be reckoned as a nonbeliever, Likewise, it has been clarified regarding the messengers of Allah. To believe in all of them is necessary, especially in those messengers whose names have clearly been

mentioned. To believe in them in all respects is a must and to believe in messengers whose names have not been mentioned is necessary too, but it can be in an abstract way. However, if a man believes in all messengers of God but refuses to believe in the Prophethood of the last messenger, Muhammad (peace be upon him) indeed, he is a nonbeliever (*kafir*). Not at one place, but at scores of places, does the Qur'an clearly declare that to believe in the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is as necessary as to believe in all other messengers of God. In other words, it is an inevitable condition. See the chapters Al-Baqarah (section 14), An-Nisaa (section 23), Al-Maidah (sections 3 and 11), Al-Anam (section 19), Al-Araf (sections 19–20), Al-Muminun (section 4), Ash-Shuaraa (section 5), Muhammad (section 1), At-Talaq (section 2). In most of these sections and verses the followers of Moses (peace be upon him) and Jesus (peace be upon him) have been called to believe in the last messenger of God, Muhammad (peace be upon him). Also they have been admonished that until and unless they believe in the Qur'an and in Muhammad (peace be upon him) they will not find the right path, the real guidance from Almighty God.

From these explanations we learn that beliefs are five in number: 1) God, 2) Angels, 3) God's books, 4) Messengers of Allah, and 5) the life Hereafter, the Day of Resurrection. A sixth belief is also mentioned in the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), 'the Hadith.' The words used in the Hadith, in Arabic, are "walqadre khairehi wa sharrehi minallahi tala." The meaning of these words is that destiny or measure of goodness and evil is from Allah. In fact this belief is part of the belief in Allah. The reason for mentioning this separately in Hadith is to show it as an important element of the belief in Allah, thus a hidden element is made explicit. The purpose of mentioning in Hadith was to keep it alive in the minds of the believers. After this brief statement on beliefs we would like to discuss each belief in detail. What is it? How are these beliefs connected with each other and intertwined and why is the denial of one implies the denial of all? What is the

usefulness of putting all of them all in one package?

A Rational Review

All five of these beliefs belong to metaphysics and they lie beyond physical things. So according to our classification, these are religious or spiritual beliefs. But, the significance of these *Imaniat* is that Islam did not prescribe them as a foundation of its spiritual order only; ethical, political and cultural orders also are founded on them. Islam, by correlating the religion and the world, has built an order with it to work in all fields of living. Whatever strength this order needs for its life and stability, it derives from these five beliefs. They are a lasting source for it, which never stops its supplies. Now we may ask about the beliefs which are of such a tremendous significance. What rank do they have according to reason? How far are they able to provide a strong base, and the source of strength for an all-encompassing and advancing system? Before finding an answer to this question, we should understand clearly that Islam proposes to lay the foundation of a civilization that may prove to be a true human civilization. In other words, it should not be based on country, race, colour, or language. It should aim at the success and prosperity of the whole humanity. Under the shade of such civilization, all useful and beneficial things should have the opportunity to grow and serve humanity in its best interest. Also, harmful things should have no place and be completely eradicated. Beliefs that belong to a materialistic world are not worthy to become the basis of a pure human civilization, because the materialistic world has two conditions. In its first condition, all men are equally related and treated and in its second condition, all men are not treated and related equally. For example, people are uniformly and universally related to the sun, moon, earth, air and light. But all men are not commonly related to a particular native country, race, colour, and language. The things belonging to the first category, such as the sun, moon, etc., are not capable of becoming the objects of belief. To believe in their existence has no meaning. To believe in them

as if they have power to reform human beings is not acceptable to reason and knowledge. They have no useful effect on human, spiritual, and ethical life. Regarding the things belonging to the second category as native country, etc., it is obvious, they cannot provide the basis for a common human civilization; because they divide the people, they do not unite them. Therefore, to build a human civilization, it is necessary to find beliefs pertaining to metaphysics but that is not enough, they should have some more peculiarities.

1. They should not be a bundle of superstitious thoughts and nonsense. They should be such entities whose reality could be recognized by reason.
2. They should not be far-fetched stories. They should have a close relation to our living.
3. They should have a kind of hidden power which could help a civilization and its order to dominate and control human intellectual power and power of action. When we see the beliefs of Islam, we find that they fulfil all above-mentioned requirements.

At first, Islamic beliefs, Allah (God), angels, inspiration (*Wahi*), and the Hereafter are not things such that their existence would be taken as impossible or not acceptable to reason. No doubt, human reason is not able to comprehend them fully and grasp to their essence. But our scientists have recognized so many incorporeal things as energy, life, gravity, and growth. We have not recognized them because we have a full comprehension of them or we have reached fully to their essence and depth. Our recognition of these things is due to our observation of some specific signs and because of these signs; we have to recognize the existence of many incorporeal things. Likewise, Islam calls people to believe in some incorporeal things and it is not necessary to fully comprehend them or to grasp their essence. It is enough to realize that the Islamic concept about humans and the universe is not against reason, more likely, it is true and it promotes the five principles, which Islam has presented as its five beliefs.

Islamic fundamental thought is that,

1. The universe has been created and established by God. He has absolute power and He is the only One running it.
2. Countless powers are working to administer the universe under His orders and guidance.
3. The Creator of human beings blended in them diverse inclinations and attributes, as goodness and evil, wisdom and imprudence, knowledge and ignorance. Man can walk on the right path or on the wrong. Whatever from these diverse attributes or inclinations dominates him, he works under the influence of it.
4. In this battlefield of the world two powers, good and evil, are fighting. The Creator of humans, in order to help the powers of good and to show men the right path, selects a best man among the people and, by giving him right and sound knowledge, appoints him as a guide to all humanity.
5. A man is not an irresponsible and unaccountable creation of Allah (SWT). He is accountable to his Creator for all of the deeds that he performs by using his power of choice. On the Day of Judgment man will have to stand before his Creator, and give an account of all his deeds, and see the consequences of his good and bad deeds. This fundamental thought requires the five beliefs. None of them are against reason and none of them amount to superstition or nonsense. To the extent that we ponder over it we come closer and closer to recognizing it as the truth. No doubt, we cannot comprehend fully the Being of our Creator and His attributes, but we have to accept and believe that there is Almighty God, and He is the One. Without this belief the puzzle of the universe cannot be solved.

We may be unable to describe the angels' being; but there is no doubt about their existence. All scholars have accepted their existence in one way or another, though they may call them by different names other than the name given by the

Qur'an. According to the scientific assumption, a day has to come when the whole structure of the world will fall apart. Thus, the supposition about resurrection is so strong and popular that it brings you very close to certainty. That man is accountable to God and that man will see the consequences of his deeds is a fundamental thought, although this cannot be proved with conclusive or decisive proof. But the sound reasoning is accepted that the Islamic concept about the life after death is more rational, purposeful, and better than all other concepts presented up to the present time.

As far as divine revelation and Prophethood is concerned, it is obvious that a scientific proof cannot be produced but those books presented as books of God and those men who are called Allah's messengers have produced such a deep and vast impact on humanity, its history and civilization, that no other book and no other leader has influenced humanity so immensely. So it is enough to believe that these books have some extraordinary qualities that are not found in any other book or in any other leader.

From this discussion, it should be quite clear that Islamic beliefs are not contradictory to human reason. The reason has no cause to reject them at all. Islamic beliefs have nothing in them that could be rejected by men in advanced stages of knowledge and reason. Even their advancement in reason will convince them to accept the beliefs. As far as belief is concerned, it does not relate to reason, it is related to intuition and insight. We believe in very many incorporeal and invisible things but the recognition of all of them depends on our intuition and insight. If we do not want to believe in invisible things and our heart does not accept them, no rational proof can force us to recognize their existence. For example, whatever evidence has been presented to prove the existence of ether, none is so strong that it could prove it with certainty and without leaving any doubt. On the basis of a few pieces of evidence, some scientists accept the existence of ether and some reject it. The evidence is not sound or extensive enough for them to accept it. So it is obvious that recognition and

belief depends on intuition and insight. The reason has a role in this process. When an invisible condition fails to get recognition from reason then a conflict arises between heart and mind that results in the weakening of belief. Contrary to this, if anything is recognized by reason, it increases the satisfaction of the heart, which strengthens the belief.

The second point is that most matters related to the invisible world are just academic matters and are not related to our practical life. For example: ether, matter, absolute existence, mass, nature, and laws of nature, the law of cause and effect. There are scores of such proved and unproved theories and hypotheses. Denial or acceptance of them has no effect on the affairs of our daily life. Opposing the Islamic beliefs, Allah, angels, inspiration or divine revelation, the Hereafter, messengers of Allah; these are not academic matters; they are deeply related to our practical life. Therefore, testifying to them has been declared a basic condition to become a believer. The reason for declaring the testifying statement as a fundamental condition is that these beliefs are deeply related to our moral and practical life. They are not merely academically accepted truth; the true knowledge of them and perfect belief in them creates deep effects on our individual characteristics and collective affairs. The third thing is that Islamic civilization needs the power that could help in keeping a fast grip and strict control over the vastly scattered followers of this civilization; even over private and veiled aspects of life. It is obvious that Islamic civilization can get such power only through Islamic beliefs. The firm belief that there is one God, Who is the most Compassionate, and Benevolent, the All-Seeing, the All-Hearing, the Dominant, and the most Powerful, rules over the entire universe and us. His numberless host are present everywhere. The messenger has been sent by Him, the commands given by the messenger have not been framed by him, but all of them come from Allah. You have to see the good and bad consequences of your obedience and revolt. As far as materialistic powers are concerned, they have power to bind your hands and feet. The

elite of society may be influenced by education and training. The hands of the law can reach only those places where law enforcement authorities are present. But beliefs have the power that gets possession of the heart and soul. This power brings under its control the whole society, including the elite, the ignorant, the scholars, and the wise or deficient in knowledge. The power of belief pierces even the loneliness of the forest and the darkness of night, where nobody can stop anybody from committing sin; nobody is even there to see the sinner, it is only faith (*Iman*) which stops man from committing a crime. No policeman with his authority, no professor with his teaching, and no court of justice can stop man from committing a crime; only the belief in God can do so. He who stops man from crime and sin is the All-Seeing and All-Hearing, the belief that the messengers' guidance is the truth and the belief that every human being is accountable to God, and the belief that there is a Day of Judgment when man will be answerable for his deeds. These beliefs can stop a human being from committing sin even in a deserted place or in the darkness of night. Another significance of Islamic belief is that it created a great nation by bringing people of diverse ethnicity together as one body. People of different colours, languages, lands, and different races have been turned by this belief into one nation. It is their belief that brought them under the influence of one civilization and made them zealous for one goal, to seek the pleasure of God. They were different from one another in thoughts, in actions, and in their customs; but their common Islamic belief made them united as one organism. It has no match in the history of civilizations up to this time.

It has been explained that *Iman*, an Islamic terminology, means to believe in Allah, angels, books, messengers, and the Day of Judgment. These five beliefs make a body together that cannot be dismembered. They are interconnected in such a way that denial of the one is the denial of all. It has already been argued critically that the civilization which Islam seeks to establish needs the five beliefs mentioned above. Without these beliefs the civilization that Islam aims at cannot be established.

Aside this, there is nothing in these beliefs that may cause a hindrance in the way of the progress of reason and knowledge.

Now, we have to deal with the third question. What status has belief in Islam, and why does *Iman* have this status? In tackling this subject, people have often failed to grasp the right concept; even some scholars made mistakes in understanding this subject, so it needs a thorough discussion.

The Importance of Belief in Islam

If the question is raised, "what is the basic goal to which the Qur'an calls mankind?" The answer should be, in one word, "Iman." The main purpose of revelation of the Qur'an and the apostleship of the last messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him) was to call the people toward "Iman."

The Qur'an calls the messenger by the title "Munadi." In Arabic this word means the person who calls people toward a particular thing. The Qur'an calls Muhammad (peace be upon him) "Munadi" as it means herald of the belief. "Our Lord! We have heard the call of one calling us to faith" (Al-i-Imran – 3:193).

The Qur'an declares about itself: "This is the book it is guidance sure without doubt, to those who fear Allah who believe in the unseen (Al-Baqarah – 2:2–3).

The Qur'an employs all kinds of discourse and means of education: sermons, teaching, promising, admonishing, arguing, reasoning, stories. The focus of all these means of teaching is on the calling toward belief. After the calling toward belief the Qur'an proceeds toward purification of soul, reformation, correction in manners, social ways and civil laws. In the view of the Qur'an, belief is the truth, the fact, the knowledge, the guidance, and the light, and unbelief is ignorance, falsehood, injustice, wrong, darkness and deviation.

The Qur'an has drawn a dividing line between two groups of people, the believers and the unbelievers. The Qur'an declares that the first group is truthful and has knowledge and the light. Now the group can clearly see the straight path, the way of guidance and piety is open for them. The people who

join this group are successful. The other group of unbelievers is of the wrongdoers, they are ignorant and groping in darkness, the way of guidance is closed to them, they have no share in piety and goodness and they are failures. The Qur'an describes the first group of people as those who can see and listen and the second group of people (unbelievers) as those who are blind, deaf, and dumb.

The Qur'an proclaims the way to belief as the right path: "And verily you do guide men to the straight way" (Ash-Shura – 42:52). "Verily this is my way leading straight, follow it, and follow not other paths" (Al-An'am – 6:153).

The Qur'an states clearly and without any ambiguity that whoever believed in God and His messenger has an illuminating lamp in his hand, he can walk on the right path with the help of the lamp and he has no fear of losing his way. In the light of the lamp he is able to distinguish the right path from the misleading ways and will reach the final destination safely and the man who has no lamp of belief is without light. It is very difficult for him to distinguish the right path from the wrong. Surely, he will walk in darkness like blind men groping. He may step on the right path but that is by chance. He has no sure means to lead him to right path. The probability is that he will fall in some ditch or he will get entangled in a thorny brush. The Qur'an says about the first group,

> So it is those who believe in him, honour him, help him, and follow the light which is sent down with him. It is they who will prosper. (Al-A'raf – 7:157)

> O you that you believe, fear Allah and believe His messenger, and He will bestow on you a double portion of His mercy: He will provide for you a light by which you shall walk (straight in your path) and He will forgive you (your past) for Allah is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (Al-Hadid – 57:28)

Remarks the Qur'an about other group:

> Those who follow anything instead of Allah follow not (His) partners. They follow only a conjecture and they do but guess. (Yunus – 10:66)

> They follow nothing but conjecture and conjecture avails nothing against truth. (An-Najm – 53:28)
>
> And who is more astray than one who follows his own lusts, devoid of guidance from Allah? For Allah guides not people given to wrongdoing. (Al-Qasas – 28:50)
>
> For any to whom Allah gives not light, there is no light! (An-Nur – 24:40)

The full explanation on this subject is found in section 34 of the chapter Al-Baqarah that shows what a great difference takes place between two groups on the basis of belief and disbelief!

> Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error, whoever rejects Tagut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that never breaks and Allah hears and knows all things. (Al-Baqarah – 2:256)

Iman (Belief) Has Precedence over Deeds

According to the Qur'an, belief has precedence over deeds. The Qur'an calls only those persons pious and good who are believers. Without belief (*Iman*), no deed can be called an act of piety. There is a great difference between belief (*Iman*) and disbelief (*kufr*). The same difference occurs between a deed with belief and a deed without belief. A deed may appear very good to people but it might be futile if it is not be based on belief.

The Qur'an says, "And he who brings the truth and he who confirms (and supports) it – such are the men who do right" (Az-Zumar – 39:33).

In the first section of the chapter Al-Baqarah, the Qur'an declares,

> A.L.M. This is the book. In it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah, who believe in Unseen and establish prayer and spend out of what We have provided for them, and who believe in the revelation sent to you and sent before your time and (in their hearts) have assurance of the

> Hereafter. They are on (true guidance) from their Lord, and it is these who will prosper. (Al-Baqarah – 2:1–5)

To the Qur'an belief (*Iman*) is the root of piety; the deeds of a believer are like a green tree, laden with flowers and fruits, planted and grown in fertile soil and looked after by an industrious gardener. Oppositely, a person who performs good deeds without belief (*Iman*) is like a gardener who sows the seeds in a barren soil and hopes that it will flourish; his hopes are bound to fail.

Throughout the Qur'an its verses give precedence to belief (*Iman*) over deeds. The Qur'an has never said that merely good deeds without belief can lead to success and salvation. If you read the Qur'an with deep pondering, you will arrive at the conclusion that wherever the Qur'an gives commands relating to ethics or to any legal aspect, it addresses only the believers. Such verses of the Qur'an usually begin with the addressing words "O, people of belief." If somewhere the Qur'an does not use these addressing words, it hints clearly that addressees are the believers. As far as unbelievers are concerned, the Qur'an calls them toward belief not toward good deeds. The Qur'an has declared about unbelievers clearly that their deeds have no value. They will have no weight on the scale, they are in vain.

The Qur'an says, "But the unbelievers, their deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts, which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water; until when he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing" (An-Nur – 24:39).

The Qur'an explains,

> Say: 'Shall we tell you of those who lose most in respect of their deeds?' Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life, while they thought that they were acquiring good by their works. They are those who deny the signs of their Lord and the fact of their having to meet Him (in the Hereafter); vain will be their works, nor shall We on the Day of Judgment give them any weight. That is their reward, Hell, because they rejected faith, and took My

> Signs and My Messengers by way of jest. (Al-Kahf – 18:103–107)

The same subject has been discussed again and again in the various chapters of the Qur'an, as in section 1 of chapter Al-Maidah, section 3 of Al-An'am, section 17 of Al-A'raf, section 3 of At-Tauba, section 2 of Hud, section 2 of Al-Ahzab, section 7 of Az-Zumer, and section 1 of Muhammad. In chapter At-Tauba it has been explained clearly that an unbeliever who performs good deeds cannot be adjudged equal to a believer. The Qur'an says,

> Do you consider the giving of drink to pilgrims, or the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque equal to (the pious service of) those who believe in Allah and the Last day and strive with might and main in the cause of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah and Allah guides not those who do wrong. Those who believe and emigrate and strive with might and main, in Allah's cause with their goods and persons have the highest rank in the sight of Allah; they are the people who will achieve (salvation). (At-Tauba – 9:19–20)

The Conclusion

A few things emerge clearly from the above-quoted verses of the Qur'an. They are summarized below:

1. The belief (*Iman*) is the principal stone of the Islamic system. The whole edifice of Islam is built on this cornerstone, and it is the belief and the disbelief that differentiate between Islam and infidelity.
2. Islam's first demand is to put faith in its beliefs (*Imaniat*). Whoever accepts this demand is considered within the fold of Islam; all ethical and civil laws are addressed to him. Whoever rejects Islam's call to put faith in its beliefs (*Imaniat*) is considered out of the fold of Islam, and Islamic laws will not be enforced on him.
3. To Islam, belief (*Iman*) is the foundation of all deeds. Islam gives weight only to those deeds that are performed on the basis of belief.

A Clarification to Remove an Objection

Some people do not understand the importance of the Belief (*Iman*). Their point of view is that giving so much importance to beliefs (*Imaniat*) is not justified and the division of people into two groups on the basis of belief is not reasonable. To them the basic thing is good character and nice behaviour and this should be the only criterion to judge whether character is good or bad. We can call a man good and pious if he has a gentle and noble character, irrespective of the fact whether or not he holds Islamic beliefs (*Imaniat*). Oppositely, if someone bears bad character, he can be called bad irrespective of his beliefs. Such people say that to relate deeds with beliefs is absurd. To them it is not acceptable that all good deeds would be in vain only because the performer has no faith in all Islamic beliefs (*Imaniat*). No doubt Islam has the right to propagate its beliefs, but to relate the good deeds to beliefs alone (*Imaniat*) is not understandable to them.

On the surface, this argument may seem weighty, and reasonable, but after understanding the nature of relation between man's character and belief (*Iman*), the objection is disproved.

To Examine the Objection

At first, we have to realize that the goodness and badness of people can be distinguished on two bases. The first is someone's natural disposition – their physical, mental, and emotional qualities that distinguish them and that they have been given by nature. It is obvious that goodness and badness of a person about his natural disposition does not lie in his hands. The second basis is related to man's reason and his or her power of choice. If this goes in the wrong direction, all deeds go wrong and become fruitless. If the power of choice is used in the right direction, all deeds will prove successful and fruitful. These two things, the natural disposition and power of choice, are intermingled in such a way that it is very difficult to differentiate between them and their effects. But intellectually we know that these are the two bases, which exist as the

foundation of man's deeds. Obviously, the deeds done on the first basis, the natural disposition, should not have any weight on the scale. Only those deeds should have weight on the scale that have been performed on the basis of power of choice and reason. In support of this argument we may see that education and training are related to reason and choice, not to the natural disposition, because this is beyond man's control. The aim of education and training is to enable man, use his power of choice and reason in the right direction and avoid wrong ways. Right education leads man toward the right path and vice versa.

If you want to develop man's skill to enable him to proceed in the right direction, what is the best help you can give? Is there any best way other than to give him the right knowledge and the right way of thinking, so that he can build his character along the right lines, and can acquire the ability to use his power of reason and choice in the right direction? Nobody can deny that knowledge has precedence over training. Knowledge is the foundation of all actions. Without the right knowledge, it is not possible for a man to act rightfully.

Knowledge is of two kinds. The first kind of knowledge relates to science and technology, which is necessary to prepare men to run worldly affairs. The other kind of knowledge may be called the real or fundamental knowledge in Qur'anic terms. It is called "Al-Ilm" (the knowledge). This kind of knowledge discusses a few fundamental questions: Who are we? What status do we have in this world? Who created the whole universe and us? What relationship do we have with the Creator? What is the right way of life to live in this world? How can we find the right way? What is the final destination of our life's journey? This kind of knowledge is the fundamental knowledge. All other sections of knowledge are the branches of this root. Righteousness of all other thoughts and actions depends on the righteousness of this fundamental knowledge. Therefore, whatever system of training and civilization that is built should be built on the foundation of this kind of knowledge. If there is anything corrupt in this kind of

knowledge, the whole system of training and civilization will be corrupted.

The Beliefs (*Imaniat*), God, Angels, Books, Messengers, and the Day of Judgment, which the Qur'an calls people to believe in, are related to "the real knowledge" (*Al-Ilm*). Islam demands belief in these beliefs with great intensity, because its whole structure of training and civilization is founded on these beliefs. Islam recognizes the only system of training and civilization, which is based on the real knowledge (*Al-Ilm*) and Islam rejects all those systems that are not founded on the real knowledge, because they lead man's powers and skills in the wrong direction, by crooked ways. Whatever part of man's energy, time and resources are spent in the wrong ways are in vain and useless. They cannot lead man to success. This is the main reason why Islam claims that its way is the only right path (*Siratal Mustaqim*) and demands to abandon all other ways based on ignorance.

The Qur'an says, "Verily this is My way leading straight; follow it; follow not (other) paths; they will scatter about from His path" (Al-An'am – 6:153).

On the same basis, Islam declares that anyone who rejects faith (*Iman*) all his deeds will be futile, and he will be among the losers. The Qur'an says, "If anyone rejects faith fruitless is his work, and in the hereafter, he will be in the ranks of those who have lost all (spiritual goods)" (Al-Maidah – 5:5).

Islam declares that the beliefs (*Imaniat*) presented by God's last Book, the Qur'an, are the knowledge, the truth, the guidance, and the light. Then it can be said that all the other beliefs adverse to Islam must be ignorance, falsehood, lies, darkness, and deviation from the right path. Had Islam not insisted with such an intensity to abandon all of the paths other than its own, and had considered that believers of Islam and the believers of other faiths are equal, then it would be tantamount to admitting that its beliefs are not the total truth and that it itself does not have firm faith in their truth, as the only guidance, and the only light.

If the case had been so, the presentation of beliefs by Islam, the establishing of a system of training and civilization, and inviting the people to be part of it would have been meaningless.

Had Islam accepted that all the sciences which are opposed to Islamic fundamental knowledge are as right as its own real knowledge, then the presentation of the real knowledge by it and calling the people to believe in it would have been meaningless.

Had Islam admitted that man can become successful with any knowledge, or even without any knowledge, calling others toward the Islamic system and establishing it would have been weightless.

In addition, if you recall the discussion about belief, it will be easy for you to understand why Islam insists so hard on belief.

People can build an edifice on sand, on water, and in the air too, but Islam is the religion of great wisdom. It cannot build the system of civilization and training on any weak foundation.

Islam, at first, lays a strong foundation deep in man's soul and mind, then on this foundation, builds a fortified building which cannot be shaken. First of all, Islam instils in man's mind that there is one God, Who is the absolute ruler in this universe and in the Hereafter. Man cannot escape from His grip, and none of man's actions and intentions are hidden from God. He sent His messengers to guide man toward the right path. He sent down the books, and divine law; by accepting and following them, man can seek the pleasure of God. If man rejects His guidance and acts against it, he will be caught and punished by God. After inscribing this imprint of belief deeply in man's heart, Islam teaches him good manners and tells him what is lawful and what is not. And with this power of belief, Islam makes him obedient to its laws and true follower of its instructions. Man's obedience will be as strong as his belief and as perfect. If the belief is weak or totally absent from the heart, the education, and the training of Islamic manners will produce no result and the whole system of civilization with all

its beauty, loftiness, and breadth will be deprived of stability. The Qur'an explains this phenomenon with an example:

> See you not how Allah sets forth a parable! A goodly word is like a goodly tree whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens, it brings forth its fruit at all times by the leave of its Lord so Allah sets forth parables for men in order that they may receive admonition. And a parable of an evil word is that of an evil tree, the root from the surface of the earth tears it up, it has no stability. Allah will establish in strength those who believe, with the word that stands firm in the world and in the Hereafter, but Allah will leave to stray, those who do wrong; Allah does what he wills. (Ibrahim – 14:24–27)

Until this point, the five beliefs (*Imaniat*) have been discussed as a whole. Now we have to see each belief, in detail, and Islamic concept about it. How far is each belief necessary and beneficial to men? What effect does each belief bring to man's mind and heart? How healthy and strong a character can be built on the foundation of beliefs? These are the various aspects of Islamic beliefs, we will discuss in the next chapter. First, we take the principal belief, the belief in God.

Belief in God

The Significance of the Belief in God

In the whole structure of Islamic beliefs, the first and fundamental thing is the "belief in God." All other remaining beliefs are the offshoots of this root. And all ethical instructions and civic laws derive strength from this central source. Whatever exists in Islamic civilization, its source and destination is God. We believe in angels because they belong to God. We believe in the Holy Books because they are sent down by God. We believe in the Day of Judgment because this is the day of God's Judgment. We have to fulfil different duties because God has imposed them. There are some rights of God and some rights of His creatures, including human beings, and we have to render all these rights because God has ordained them. We have to obey all orders and prohibitions because they are from God. In short, whatever comprises in Islam is based on the belief in God. If this foundation is removed, the whole structure of the Islamic system and civilization will fall down.

The Belief in God in Detail

The belief in God, which is a fundamental dogma of Islam's ideological and practical system, is not limited just to a concept of God's presence. It contains a complete concept of God's attributes, which has such a great power that it encompasses all human powers and rules over them. Merely the affirmation of God's existence and presence is not Islam's distinction; other faiths also affirm God's existence in one way or other. Islam's distinction from other religions is that Islam gives authentic and perfect knowledge (as far as the human mind can perceive) about the attributes of God.

Then Islam on the basis of this knowledge and by turning it into belief (*Iman*) does a great job of purifying souls, organizing practices, spreading goodly things, prohibiting

mischief and establishing culture. No other religion or nation can match Islam in this regard.

The "phrase" (*Kalimah*), there is no God but Allah, is the brief assertion of the belief in God (*Iman Billah*). Declaration of these words (*Kalimah*), by tongue, and affirmation by heart is a compulsory condition to enter the fold of Islam. In other words, if someone intends to embrace Islam, he should openly declare that there is no God (*Ilah*) but Allah and hold it in his heart. It means that nothing and none in the whole universe has divinity (*Uluhiyat*), it is attributed only to God. All feelings, thoughts, beliefs, worship, and acts of obedience, which are specific to divinity, should be specific to Almighty God alone.

This brief declaration (*Kalimah*) is composed of three elements. First the concept of divinity, second the denial of divinity to all other things. Third is the affirmation of divinity only to Allah (God). Whatever has been said in the Qur'an about the attributes of God are the details of these three elements.

At first, Islam has presented the concept of divinity (*Uluhiyat*) with such an authenticity and perfection that we cannot find it in any other book or religion of the world. No doubt, in all nations and faiths the concept of divinity is found, but in all of them it is erroneous or incomplete.

The concept of divinity varies from religion to religion, from one religious and philosophical school of thought to another, all are wrong or defective. Here we are giving a brief description of most of them.

To some of them *divinity* means preeminence and self-existence. To some others it means merely origin. Some others say that divinity in its meaning is equal to power and force. According to some religions, divinity is dreadful and a thing to be afraid of. In some other religious philosophy, divinity is love, some of them think divinity is a power, which fulfils all needs and grants all requests. To some other religions, divinity is divisable and transferable. In some other religions, divinity has been polluted with incarnation, image worship, and reproduction. Some think that the divinity lives in heaven.

Some believe that divinity has come down to earth in the disguise of a human being.

The Qur'an is the only book which corrected all these wrong and defective concepts. It is the Holy Book of the Qur'an, which glorified and sanctified the divinity (*Uluhiyat*). It is the Qur'an which showed us that none can take the place of divinity except that One Who is Independent, Absolute, Eternal, Everlasting, The Self-Subsisting, Support of All, Omnipotent, The Highest Master, Whose knowledge encompasses all, Whose mercy envelopes to all, Whose power is dominant on all, Whose wisdom is flawless, Whose justice free from all oppression, Who is the Life Giver, and Sustainer. All need His beneficence and care. To him all creatures will return. He is the only One, Who will take account of all, and only He has the power of giving reward or punishment. The Qur'an says that the attributes of God are not divisible and separable; so that they cannot be given totally or partially to different deities simultaneously; neither are these attributes circumscribed by time nor they are a passing phenomenon, so that they cannot be transferred from one deity to another in alternate periods.

After presenting this right and perfect concept of divinity, the Qur'an with its full force proves that this wholesome and perfect concept of divinity does not compare to anything in the universe. All created beings in the universe are destitute before Him subdued, subjected, and perishable. Put aside, their ability for being harmful or beneficial to anyone else, they themselves have no power to keep any harm from themselves. They are not independent; their existence, and their strength to act and their influence, depends on a divine power. In short, there is no one in the universe who has smallest particle of divinity, or has any right to receive any supplication from us.

After this denial of divinity to anyone, the Qur'an affirms the divinity in the one God, and demands that man abandon all false gods, and believe in only One God, bow to Him, worship Him, love Him, fear Him, trust Him. Whatever you want to beg for, beg from Him; in all circumstances, depend on Him, and

never forget that one day you have to appear before Him, and give your account to Him, and your fate, good or bad, is in His hands.

Moral Benefits of Belief in God

When the belief in God gets rooted deep in the heart of man and he acquires full knowledge of God's attributes, he is benefited by this belief in such great abundance that no other belief can match it in this regard.

Extension in Vision

The first fruit of the belief in God is that man's sight becomes more broad, and it becomes as wide as the universe itself. If man continues seeing the world in the context only of himself, his sight will be limited to the narrow circle of his own strength, knowledge, and desires. In this same narrow circle he tries to find supporters, and fears those who are more powerful and who are oppressors. His friendship and enmity, love and hate, respect and disrespect all remain bound by the same narrow circle of his own self. He makes his own benefits and loses sight of the criterion to judge others, whether they are his friends or his enemies. On the contrary, when man believes in God, his sight broadens. Now it is no more limited to his own narrow circle, it extends to the whole universe. He looks at the world relating it to its creator God. With the change in his vision he has a quite different relation with everything in the universe. Now he does not see anything in the universe, however great and powerful it may be, as his sustainer, benefactor or as having the power to harm him. In addition, no one is so powerful that could demand obedience, worship or respect from him. He no longer fears anyone except God. He trusts only in God. His friendship or enmity, love or hate, is not for himself: if it is there, it is for God sake. He is living no more in his own narrow world, he is living in the vast world of God, Who is the Lord of the whole universe. His rule is not over a particular part of the world. He is the Lord of all the heavens and earth and Master of east and west.

The Qur'an says, "All creatures in the heavens and on earth willing or unwilling bowed to His will (accepted Islam) and to Him shall they all be brought back" (Al-i-Imran – 3:83).

All are busy in glorifying and sanctifying Him. The Qur'an says, "The seven heavens and the earth and all things therein declare His glory" (Al-Israa – 17:44)

In this context, when man sees the universe, no one seems to him a stranger, he looks to all of them as his near and dear. His sympathy, love, and services will not be confined to a narrow circle drawn by him, keeping in view his own interests.

In short, whoever believes in God will never be short-sighted. Even the term "international" cannot convey his breadth of vision, in fact he should be called universal and cosmopolitan.

Self-Esteem

Belief in God elevates man from humility and disgrace to the highest point of self-esteem. He was used to bowing down in front of anything that seemed to him strong, splendid, grand, magnificent, useful, or harmful; he was accustomed to being afraid of them, and stretching out his hand to beg from them, and depending on them; but when he received the real knowledge about God, then he realized that they are false deities. The ones from whom he used to beg are themselves destitute and needy. The Qur'an says, "Those whom they call upon do seek (for themselves) means of access to their Lord" (Al-Israa – 17:57).

The deities that man was worshipping themselves are slaves of God just like man himself. The Qur'an says, "Verily those whom you call upon besides God are servants like unto you" (Al-A'raf – 7:194). "But those you call upon besides Him are unable to help you, and indeed to help themselves" (Al-A'raf – 7:197).

The Master of real power is God as the Qur'an says, "To God belongs all power" (Al-Baqarah – 2:165).

He is the Ruler and Giver of commands. The Qur'an says, "The command rests with none but God" (Al-An'am – 6:57).

None is helper and protector except God. The Qur'an says, "And besides Him you have neither patron nor helper" (Al-Baqarah – 2:107).

Help comes only from Him, as the Qur'an says, "There is no victory except from God the Exalted, the Wise" (Al-i-Imran – 3:126).

He is the only one who provides. As the Qur'an says, "For God is He Who gives (all) sustenance, Lord of power, steadfast (forever)" (Az-Zariyat – 51:58).

He has all the keys of heavens and earth, as the Qur'an says, "To Him belong the keys of the heavens and earth" (Ash-Shura – 42:12).

He gives life and takes it back. Without His sanction no one can kill or protect anyone. The Qur'an says, "Nor can a soul die except by God's leave" (Al-i-Imran – 3:145).

He is the One, Who has the real power of harming and benefiting. The Qur'an says, "If God does touch you with hurt there is none can remove it but He" (Yunus – 10:107).

After realizing this knowledge, man becomes fearless of all powers of the world, and turns his back to them. He does not bow to anyone except to God, and he does not spread his hand to anyone for help. No one's greatness fills his heart except God's greatness. He does not depend on anyone but God.

Modesty and Humbleness

The believer has self-esteem. However, this self-esteem is not that fake one, which comes out of pride of wealth, force, or skill. In addition, this is not the outcome of pomp and haughtiness. Actually, this is the result of the relation of a believer, which he develops with Almighty God and the logical result of his right concept about his own relation with God and other creatures. The belief in God creates a beautiful combination of self-esteem and humbleness in a believer. He understands without any doubt that he is helpless against the power of God. The Qur'an says, "He is irresistibly Supreme over His servants" (Al-An'am – 6:61).

He also understands that no one including him can escape from the grip of God's Sovereign power. As the Qur'an says, "O you assembly of jinns and men, if it be you can pass beyond zones of the heavens and the earth, pass you! not without authority shall you be able to pass!" (Ar-Rahman – 55:33).

The believer understands that not only he, but the whole universe, is destitute before God, Who is Eternal and Absolute, as the Qur'an says, "But Allah is free of all wants, and it is you that are needy" (Muhammad – 47:38).

Whatever is in the heavens and on the earth belongs to God, as the Qur'an says, "To Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and on the earth" (Al-Baqarah – 2:284).

A true believer understands that whatever of bounties he has, all are from God, as the Qur'an says, "And you have no good thing but is from Allah" (An-Nahl – 16:53).

After having this belief, there will be no place for pride and pomp in the heart of a believer. Because the belief in God makes a man's whole being humble and modest, as the Qur'an says: And servants of (Allah) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, "Peace" (Al-Furqan – 25:63).

Refutation of False Expectations

The great advantage of the right concept about the relation between Creator and creatures is that it cuts the roots of all false expectations and reliance, and man realizes very well that there is no way of salvation except right belief and righteous deeds. Some of those who do not have this right knowledge think that there are gods of lesser status in great number, who align with God and help Him in His work. Their false assumption is that they will be able to receive intercession from associate gods by pleasing them, as the Qur'an says: And they say, "These are our intercessors with Allah" (Yunus – 10:18).

Some people think that God has a son, and the son through his atonement has made their salvation sure. Others think that they themselves are God's sons and His beloved ones, as the

Qur'an says: (Both) the Jews and the Christian say, "we are sons of Allah, and His beloved" (Al-Maidah – 5:18).

They have false expectation that whatever they want, they can do, and they will not receive punishment for their bad deeds. Many such false expectations keep them immersed in sins, because due to relying on baseless expectations, they become careless about cleansing their soul and reforming their deeds. But the Qur'an's teaching about belief in God has no place for false expectations. The Qur'an says that no nation has special relations with God, all are His creatures, and He is the Creator of all, as the Qur'an says, "No, you are but men, of the men He has created" (Al-Maidah – 5:18).

Honour and whatever distinction someone has is based on righteousness, as the Qur'an says, "The most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you" (Al-Hujur'at – 49:13).

God has no progeny nor any partner and helper, as the Qur'an says

> Say: "praise be to Allah, who begets no son, and has no partner in His dominion; nor (needs) He any to protect Him from humiliation; you magnify Him for His greatness and glory!" (Al-Israa – 17:111)

Those whom you think are His partners or offspring, all are His slaves and servants, as the Qur'an says, "To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on the earth; every thing renders worship to Him" (Al-Baqarah – 2:116).

No one dares to intercede with God without His permission, as the Qur'an says, "Who is he that intercedes with Him save by His leave?" (Al-Baqarah – 2:255).

If you do revolt against God, you will not find any intercessor and helper, as the Qur'an says, "But when (once) Allah wills a people's punishment, there can be no turning it back, nor will they find, besides Him any to protect" (Ar-Ra'd – 13:11).

Hopefulness and Peace of Mind

The belief in God gives such powerful hope that it cannot be broken by despair and disheartenment. Belief in God is an everlasting source of strength through which a believer constantly receives power. His heart is strengthened and his soul satisfied without any break. When all doors have been shut in his face, and all means of help cut off from him, and all sources of support closed to him, the only support which remains with him is the support of God. Relying on this support, a believer's heart is always full of hope. Because God in Whom he believes says, "When my servants ask you concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I respond to the prayer of every suppliant when he calls on Me" (Al-Baqarah – 2:186).

Do not fear of any injustice from God, as He is not cruel and unjust. The Qur'an says, "For Allah never does injustice to those who serve Him" (Al-i-Imran – 3:182).

Do not lose hope, believe in God's Mercy, because His mercy has covered everything, as the Qur'an says, "But My Mercy extends to all things" (Al-A'raf – 7:156).

Only they lose hope in God's Mercy who do not believe in Him, as the Qur'an says, "Truly no one despairs of Allah's soothing mercy, except those who have no faith" (Yusuf – 12:87).

For a believer there is no room for despair. If he has committed sin he can ask forgiveness, God will forgive him for his sins, as the Qur'an says,

> If anyone does evil or wrongs his own soul but afterwards seeks Allah's forgiveness, he will find Allah Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (An-Nisaa – 4:110)

> Say: "O my servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Az-Zumar – 39:53)

If worldly means do not help a believer, he should turn his back to them and turn his face toward God, then no fear and grief will come near to him, as the Qur'an says,

> In the case of those who say, "Our Lord is Allah," and further stand straight and steadfast. The angels descend on them (from time to time): 'Fear you not! (they suggest). Nor grieve!' But receive the glad tidings of the Garden (of Bliss), the which you were promised! (Fussilat – 41:30)

The remembrance of God brings peace and solace to hearts, as the Qur'an says, "In the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction" (Ar-Ra'd – 13:28).

Patience and Trust

When the hopefulness develops in higher stages, it turns into patience, steadfastness, and trust in God. At this stage a believer's heart becomes as strong as a rock, and all calamities, enmities, conflicts, and inimical powers united cannot shake him from his place of steadfastness. This power cannot be achieved by anyone, without firm belief in God, because he who does not believe in God relies on material and imaginative powers while they themselves have no power of their own, anyone who depends on such powers, in fact, depends on the weakest things, as a spider's thread. The Qur'an says, "The parable of those who take protectors other than Allah is that of the spider, who builds (to itself) a house, but truly the flimsiest of houses" (Al-Ankabut – 29:41).

Anyone who depends on such weak supports surely becomes weak, and the Qur'an affirms:

> Those on whom, besides Allah, you call, cannot create (even) a fly, if they all met together for the purpose! And if the fly should snatch away anything from them they would have no power to release it from the fly. Feeble are (both) the seeker and the sought!

However, one who trusts in God has a strong support that never fails, as the Qur'an warns:

> Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error: Whoever rejects Tagut and believes in Allah has grasped a most trustworthy handhold that never breaks. And Allah hears and knows all things. (Al-Baqarah – 2:256)

If the believer has the support of Lord of heaven and earth, then who can overpower him? As the Qur'an cautions, "If Allah helps you, none can overcome you" (Al-i-Imran – 3:160).

No calamities of the world can shake him from his position of steadfastness, because he believes that all good and bad things are from God, as the Qur'an advises, "Say: All things are from Allah" (An-Nisaa – 4:78).

He believes that whatever calamity comes, it comes from God, and the Qur'an counsels, "Say: Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us: He is our Protector: And on Allah let the believers put their trust" (At-Tauba – 9:51).

The messengers of God (peace be upon them) faced the dreadful calamities of the world. They fought alone against the powerful kingdoms and nations. Without material resources they stood up to make the world accept the sovereignty of One Almighty God. Despite the violent storms of hardships, they did not abandon their mission. Where did they derive from the tremendous power to do all this? Their only source was patience and trust in God. Consider Abraham's life (peace be upon him): How he challenged the mighty king of the time, and how he was unafraid of the fire lit to burn him alive. At last he (peace be upon him) left his home, land, and nation empty-handed, declaring, "I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me" (As-Saffat – 37:99).

Look at God's messenger Hud (peace be upon him), how he challenged his powerful nation A'ad: The Qur'an relates,

> So scheme (your worst) against me, all of you, and give me no respite. I put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord! There is not a moving creature, but He has grasp of its forelock. (Hud – 11:55–56)

Recall the life of Moses (peace be upon him): He confronted the tyrannical king of Egypt, Pharaoh, only by dint his trust in God. When his very life was threatened, Moses calmly said to Pharoah, "I have taken refuge in my Lord and your lord against all oppressors," as the Qur'an relates, "Moses said: 'I have indeed called upon my Lord and your Lord (for

protection) from every arrogant one who believes not in the Day of Account' " (Al-Mumin or Gafir – 40:27).

Pharaoh chased Moses with the full strength of his army, Moses' people bewailed in despair: "No doubt, Pharaoh will catch us," but Moses assured them with great peace of mind: "This will not happen, God is with me," as the Qur'an relates:

> And when the two bodies saw each other, the people of Moses said: 'We are sure to be overtaken.' Moses said: 'By no means! My Lord is with me! Soon will He guide me!' (Ash-Shu'araa – 26:61–62)

Look at the life of the last messenger of God, Muhammad (peace be upon him). When he migrates, on his way to Madinah, he enters a cave; only one companion is with him. The bloodthirsty unbelievers, who were out in search of him, happened to reach the opening of the cave, but Muhammad was not disturbed, he consoled his companion, by saying "don't be worried, God is with us," as the Qur'an relates:

> If you help not the prophet (it is no matter): for Allah did indeed help him, when the unbelievers drove him out: being the second of the two they two were in the cave and he said to his companion, "have no fear, for Allah is with us." (At-Tauba – 9:40)

This unshakable strength, resolution as strong as steel and steadfastness as a rock could not have been achieved except through belief in God.

Bravery

There is another characteristic: the bravery, valour or courage that comes out of belief in God. Two things make man a coward: first the love for life, family, and wealth, second is fear that comes out of the wrong belief that weapons bestow the power of inflicting wounds and killing. Belief in God dispels both the mistaken beliefs from man's heart and instils in his heart the belief that it is God's right to be loved more than anything else. As the Qur'an says, "But those of faith are overflowing in their love for Allah" (Al-Baqarah – 2:165).

It is sowed deep in the heart of a believer that wealth and children are all worldly adornments and sooner or later they will depart from him; the everlasting things are those which will be given to him in the Hereafter, as the Qur'an explains:

> Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of the world: but the things that endure, good deeds, are best in the sight of your Lord as rewards and best as the (foundation for) hopes. (Al-Kahf – 18:46)

The worldly life lasts a few days; you will never be successful in prolonging it for a long time. One day your life will end, as the Qur'an says:

> Say: the death from which you flee will truly overtake you then you will be sent back to the knower of things secret and open: and He will tell you the things that you did. (Al-Jumu'a – 62:8)

> Wherever you are, death will find you out even if you are in towers built up strong and high. (An-Nisaa – 4:78)

Then, why should we not sacrifice our life in the path of God and receive an eternal life full of good things and pleasures. The Qur'an says, "Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. No, they live, finding their sustenance from their Lord. They rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah (Al-i-Imran – 3:169–170).

Then why should we not sacrifice the passing pleasures and temporary gains for seeking the lasting pleasure of God, Who is Master of our life and wealth and can give us better and eternal life and everlasting benefits. The Qur'an says,

> Allah has purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the garden of paradise: they fight in His Cause and slay and are slain: a promise binding on Him in truth, through the Torah, the Gospel, and the Qur'an: and who is more faithful to His Covenant than Allah? Then rejoice in the bargain which you have concluded: that is the achievement supreme. (At-Tauba – 9:111)

As far as the fear is concerned, the believer has been given the knowledge and belief that the real power of inflicting harm and killing is not in man or animal, nor in gun or sword, nor in wood or stone, only God has this power. If all the powers of the world together intend to harm someone, they cannot do so until God wills it. The Qur'an says, "But they could not thus harm anyone except by Allah's permission" (Al-Baqarah – 2:102).

Allah has predetermined the time of death for everyone, no one can bring death to anyone before or after the decreed time. The Qur'an says, "Nor can a soul die except by Allah's leave, the term being fixed as by writing" (Al-i-Imran – 3:145).

When the appointed hour of death comes, no power can save it, as the Qur'an says, "Say: Even if you had remained in your homes, those for whom death was decreed would certainly have gone forth to the place of their death" (Al-i-Imran – 3:154).

The fact is this: instead of fearing the people, we should have fear of God. The Qur'an says, "It is only the satan that suggests to you the fear of his partisans; be you not afraid of them, but fear Me, if you have faith" (Al-i-Imran – 3:175).

Only God is the One Who deserves to be feared, as the Qur'an says, "You did fear the people, but it is more fitting that you should fear Allah" (Al-Ahzab – 33:37).

The hearts of people who try to escape from fighting in the way of God are void of faith; they fear more from people than God, as the Qur'an says, "When (at length) the order for fighting was issued to them. Behold! a section of them, feared men as, or even more than they should have feared Allah" (An-Nisaa – 4:77).

On the contrary, when those who are true believers see a larger army, their spirit of bravery and valour increases many fold, because their reliance is not on worldly means, it is in God, and His Support, as the Qur'an says, "Those to whom men said: 'A great army is gathering against you, so fear them:' but it (only) increased their faith: they said: 'for us

Allah suffices, and He is the best Guardian!'" (Al-i-Imran – 3:173).

Contentment and Sufficiency

It is the belief in God that cleanses hearts from the feelings of greed, jealousy, and malice, which induce men to gather wealth increasingly through shameless and unlawful ways, thus they create chaos among people. The belief creates contentment and sufficiency in a believer's heart. He does not join the race in profiteering and exploitation. He does not run hither and thither in the ways of injustice and violence. He seeks God's bounties through respectable and permissible means, and whatever finds he more or less becomes content taking that as God's bounty. The believer has been taught that the bounties are in the hand of God. He gives them to whom He wills. The Qur'an says,

> Say: "All bounties are in the hand of Allah: He grants them to whom He pleases." (Al-i-Imran – 3:73)
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> For His Mercy He specially chooses whom He pleases: for Allah is the Lord of bounties unbounded. (Al-i-Imran – 3:74)
>
> Allah does enlarge, or grant by (strict) measure. (Ar-Ra'd – 13:26)

The sovereignty is in God's hand. He gives the governing position to whom He wills. The Qur'an says, "For the earth is Allah's, to give as a heritage to such of His servants as he pleases; and the end is (best) for the righteous" (Al-A'raf – 7:128).

Honour and wealth is in God's hand. It is He Who grants honour to whom He wills and makes contemptible whom He wills, as the Qur'an says:

> Say: O Allah! Lord of power (and rule) You give power to whom You please and You strip off power from whom You please: You endue with honour whom You please, and You bring low whom You please: in Your hand is all good. Verily over all things You have power. (Al-i-Imran – 3:26)

God has created a system and according to that system He has not granted His bounties to men equally. In honour, wealth, power, beauty, and fame their share is not equal, some have been given more and some less. He Himself knows the prudence of the system. It is not fit for man to try to change the system made by God; if he tries he will not succeed. The Qur'an says:

> Allah has bestowed His gifts of sustenance more freely on some of you than others. (An-Nahl – 16:71)
>
> And covet not the thing in which Allah has made some of you excel others. (An-Nisaa – 4:32)

Ordering and Reforming the Conduct

This is the most important advantage that culture derives from the belief in God. It creates the sense of responsibility in the individual members of human society. Souls are purified, conduct is reformed, mutual dealings are corrected, the sense of obeying the law is developed, and the spirit of obedience and discipline takes root in hearts. A forceful inner power purifies individuals within their selves, and prepares them for forming a righteous society

This is the miracle of belief in God, otherwise no governing authority, no education and training, no sermon and admonishment is able to order and reform the conduct of individuals and their society on such a deep and vast scale. As far as worldly power is concerned its reach is limited to the bodies of people, it cannot reach their souls, even its control over the bodies is not in all places or at all the times. The influence of education and training, sermons and lectures, usually is limited to reason and thoughts. When the human soul (*Nafs-e-Ammarah*) remains out of touch it even overpowers the reason. On the contrary, when belief makes its place deep in human's heart and soul, there it develops such a powerful and strong conscience or compunctious soul (*Nafs-e-Lauwamah*) that it guides man to the right path in all places at all times. This conscience even affects the wickedest persons, to some extent through its reproach.

This is a great advantage and it is the result of the belief in God, in His Knowledge and in His Power. The Qur'an informs man repeatedly that God's Knowledge dominates and spreads to everything and nothing can hide itself from Him. The Qur'an says:

> To Allah belong the East and the West: whithersoever you turn, there is Allah's face. For Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. (Al-Baqarah – 2:115)
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> Wherever you are, Allah will bring you together, for Allah has power over all things. (Al-Baqarah – 2:148)
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> From Allah, verily nothing is hidden on earth or in the heavens. (Al-i-Imran – 3:5)
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> With Him are the keys of the Unseen, the treasures that none knows but He. He knows whatever there is on the earth and in the sea, not a leaf does fall but with His knowledge: there is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is (inscribed) in a Record Clear (to those who can read). It was We Who created man, and We know what suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein. (Qaf – 50:16)
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> See you not that Allah does know (all) that is in the heavens and on earth? There is not a secret consultation between three, but He is the fourth of them, or between five but He is the sixth, nor between fewer nor more, but He is with them. Whatsoever they are in the end, He will tell them what they did on the Day of Judgment. For Allah has full knowledge of all things. (Al-Mujadila – 58:7)
>
> They seek to hide themselves from the people but they cannot hide from Allah, while He is with them when they plot by night in words that He cannot approve: and Allah does compass round all that they do. (An-Nisaa – 4:108)
>
> Know they not that Allah knows what they conceal and what they reveal. (Al-Baqarah – 2:77)
>
> Behold, two (guardian angels) appointed to learn (his doings) learn and (note them), one sitting on the right and on the left. (Qaf – 50:17)

> It is the same (to Him) whether any of you conceal his speech or declare it openly; whether he lie hid by night or walk forth freely by day. For each (such person) there are (angels) in succession before and behind him; they guard him by command of Allah. (Ar-Ra'd – 13:10)

> If you pronounce the word aloud, (it is no matter): for verily He knows what is secret and what is yet more hidden. (Ta-Ha – 20:7)

With all this, it also has been instilled in man's mind deeply that one day he has to meet his Lord. As the Qur'an says, "And know that you are to meet Him (in the hereafter)" (Al-Baqarah – 2:223). "That you will surely be gathered unto Him (Al-Baqarah – 2:203).

He will take account of everything from man. As the Qur'an says, "Allah takes careful account of all things" (An-Nisaa – 4:86).

Allah's grip is very hard. The Qur'an says, "Truly strong is the grip of your Lord" (Al-Buruj – 85:11).

Almighty God in His Book and His messenger Muhammad (peace be on him) in his sayings tried to instil this belief in hearts, in so many ways, because this belief is the main power to enforce the laws of Islam. Whatever laws Islam has ordained, pertaining to permissible and prohibited things, to conduct social life and mutual dealings, enforcing them does not depend on armed forces or police nor on education and instructions, it depends on the belief that these laws have been given by God, Who is the Greatest and the Absolute Ruler, Who knows everything, and no transgressor can hide his crime from Him, and nor can he evade His account taking. This is the reason that the Qur'an after each ordaining admonishes that these are the limits and laws prescribed by God; beware, do not cross the limits. The Qur'an says:

> These are the limits ordained by Allah so do not transgress them, if any do transgress the limits ordained by Allah, such persons wrong (themselves as well as others). (Al-Baqarah – 2:229)

Remember: whatever you do God sees it. The Qur'an says, "But fear Allah and know that Allah sees well what you do" (Al-Baqarah – 2:233).

Belief in Angels

The Purpose of the Belief in Angels

In fact, the belief in angels is an integral part of the belief in God. The purpose of this belief is not merely to accept that there are other creatures of God who exist by the name of angels. The actual purpose of this belief is to understand their real position in the whole universe so that the belief in God should not be polluted with belief in the plurality of God.

As we have briefly stated before, a brief concept of angels has always existed in all religions and nations in one form or other. Whatever concept they had, they built their faiths on it. Some of them thought that they are central parts or nucleus of nature or the powers, which are administering different departments of the universe. Some others imagined that they are deities, and each of them is the head of a particular department of nature. Air, rain, light, heat fire have their own deity angels who have sovereign authority over them. Some communities conceived as helpers, assistants or representatives of God. Some others think that angels are sustainer or provider for various species. To some of them angels are minds. Some are of the opinion that they are imaginations of God. Some believe that they are daughters or sons of God. Some of them believe that angels have material body while to some others they are abstract powers. According to some religions, angels belong to various planets and stars. Angels have been the subject of wonderful and amusing thoughts. In a nutshell, the belief that angels are associated with God in administering the universe has been common among religions and their leaders, in one way or other, therefore angels used to be personified by making their statues, idols and images, and are worshipped, and beseeched for needs as they are sustainer or provider. Due to these concepts about angels the course of polytheism has been active all over the world and in all times.

The Real Position of Angels in the Universe

The Holy Book Qur'an gives the real concept about angels. On one side the Qur'an established the pure and perfect unity in God's being, His attributes, and actions, and on the other hand, presented the right concept about angels so that the very door be closed, through which polytheism enters.

The Qur'an has not discussed the physics of angels because it was useless and not understandable to man. The basic question was: What position angels have in the whole system of the universe? The answer given by the Qur'an is quite clear, it explains that angels are not God's offspring nor they are His partners, they are just His obedient servants and slaves. The Qur'an says:

> And they say: 'The most gracious has taken a son' Glory to Him! They are (but) servants raised to honour. They speak not before He speaks, and they act (in all things) by His command. He knows what is before them, and what is behind them, and they offer no intercession except for those with whom He is well pleased, and they stand in awe and reverence of His (glory)." (Al-Anbiyaa – 21:26–28)

They manage only those affairs, which have been assigned to them by their Lord.

Leave aside the question of their being associates of God, they even dare not to evade His command by a hair's breadth. Their work is only to worship God and be obedient to Him. They cannot be neglectful of their duties for a moment. All the time they are busy in glorifying and praising their Lord. The Qur'an says:

> The thunder repeats His praises, and so do the angels with awe. (Ar-Ra'd – 13:13)

> And to Allah does prostrate all that is in the heavens and on earth, whether moving creatures or the angels: for none are arrogant (before their Lord). They all fear their Lord, high above them, and they do all that they are commanded. (An-Nahl – 16:49–50)

> To Him belong all (creatures) in the heavens and on earth: even those who are with Him are not too proud to serve Him. Nor are they (ever) weary (of His service): they celebrate His praises night and day, nor do they even flag or intermit. (Al-Anbiyaa – 21:19–20)
>
> Who flinch not (from executing) the commands they receive from Allah, but do (precisely) what they are commanded. (At-Tahrim – 66:6)

This real and right concept about angels left no room for polytheism, because those who were most likely to be raised to the status of God proved to be helpless slaves, as we are. After this real concept and belief, who can become the centre of our worship, prayer, supplication, trust and reliance, except God?

The Relative Position of Man and Angel

Not only this, discussing further, the Qur'an explains the relative position of man to angel, so that man could understand clearly what status he has. In God's Book, where the event of the creation of Adam (peace be upon him) has been related, at the same place it also has been clarified that, when God appointed Adam (peace be upon him) as His vicegerent on the earth, He commanded angels to prostrate before Adam, all angels prostrated except Iblis. (See section 4 of Al-Baqarah, section 2 of Al-A'araf, section 7 of Al-Israa, section 7 of Al-Kahf, section 7 of Taha, and section 8 of Sa'ad.) On this occasion angels pleaded their superiority over Adam (peace be upon him), by presenting their glorifying and praising of God, but God rejected their claim, and by taking a test proved that Adam has been given more knowledge than angels. When Iblis by virtue of his origin claimed his superiority over Adam and proudly refused to prostrate before Adam, then he was denounced and expelled forever by God. This thing, on one hand, gives to man the sense of self-esteem, on the other hand, it places his zealous adoration and obedience together at the altar of God. This shows that no one is higher than man except God. However, the angels are honoured servants and have superiority over all other beings but they have already accepted

man's superiority by prostrating before him then who can be man's rightful deity to be worshipped and prostrated, except Almighty God?

With this right and real knowledge about angels, the belief in God becomes pure and quite clean of wrong concepts.

An Other Purpose of Belief in Angels

The other position of angels stated by the Qur'an is that they were the means of communication between God and His prophets. God used to send His messages and commands to His messengers (peace be upon them) through His angels and He also makes sure through the angels that His message should reach His messengers without any distortion, doubt, and interpolation. First, the angels are obedient, God-fearing, and pure of all voluptuous inclinations and they cannot add or delete anything from the message of God. The second is that they are very powerful and no satanic power is able to interfere in their work of carrying messages of God to His messengers (peace be upon them). This subject has been discussed at various places in the Qur'an:

> (It is) in books held greatly in honour, exalted (in dignity), kept pure and holy, (written) by the hands of scribes honourable and pious and just. (Abasa – 80:13–16)

> Verily this is the word of a most honourable Messenger, endued with power, held in honour by the Lord of the Throne, with authority there, (and) faithful to his trust. (At-Takwir – 81:19–21)

> He (alone) knows the unseen, nor does he make anyone acquainted with His Secrets. Except a messenger whom He has chosen: and then He makes a band of watchers march before him and behind him, that he may know that they have (truly) brought and delivered the Message of their Lord and He encompasses all that is with them, and takes account of every single thing. (Al-Jinn – 72:26–28)

> Say: "The Holy Spirit has brought the revelation from thy Lord in Truth." (An-Nahl – 16:102)

> Verily this is a Revelation from the Lord of the worlds: with it came down the Truthful spirit. (Ash-Shu'araa – 26:192)
>
> That this is indeed a Qur'an most honourable in a book well-guarded, which none shall touch but those who are clean: a revelation from the Lord of the Worlds. (Al-Waqi'a – 56:77–80)

Through these verses, we come to know that belief in angels is not only for the belief in God, it is also necessary for belief in God's Books as well as in His messengers. To believe in angels means to believe that the medium also is trustworthy through which the Message of God reached His messengers. Our belief in the Message of God and His messengers cannot be complete until we trust in the means through which the message has been sent.

The Third Purpose

In addition to this, the Qur'an describes another position of angels and that is, they are workers of God's Dominion. Angels are His servants, who have been appointed for different duties in administering the universe. Angels have the same status that servants (services) have in worldly governments. Through them He causes torment to some people and showers mercy on others, to some He sends death, and to some He gives life, He commands angels to bring rain to some people and famine and drought to others. They also have been appointed to keep the record of every man's sayings, thoughts, and his doings, and watching every action of him. Until man is working within the respite given by God to him, the workers (angels) are cooperating with him in all his deeds despite their knowledge, which of his deeds are good or bad, they let him do, and cooperate with him under the will of God. But as soon as his appointed time comes (death), the same servants (angels) who were helping him to run his business of his dominion do not hesitate to arrest him. The same air which was the means of his life suddenly becomes wild, and turns his living town upside down, the same water through which he was plowing with his

large ships and boats, drowns him with its powerful, and violent waves, the same earth on which he was dwelling with peace and comfort, with a jolt of earthquake buries him with all his belongings. Within a second of receiving command, the orderly (angel) handcuffs the most powerful ruler on the earth. The Qur'an has drawn the scene of this situation in various places in clear terms.

In view of these facts, it is obvious that belief in angels is an integral part of the belief in God. This means that with the belief in the Lord of the universe man has to believe in His servants too. Without this belief man neither can understand his own status in the universe, nor can he work with a complete understanding of his position.

Belief in Messengers

What Is the Prophetic Mission?

After the belief in God and His Oneness, the other fundamental belief is the belief in God's messengers (peace be upon them). No doubt, the real faith is belief in God and His Oneness, and as far as obedience and the following is concerned real faith lies with belief in *Risalat.* The literal meaning of *Risalat* in Arabic is "carrying a message". The person who carries message from one person to other is called "Rasul" but in Islamic terminology, the person who is appointed by God as His messenger and brings God's message to people and shows them the right path is called *Rasul.* And his prophetic mission is called *Risalat.* Therefore, the Qur'an uses the word *Hadi* also for *Rasul* that means a person who shows the right path.

God did a great favour to man by creating a guide in his soul, which shows man what is good and bad, right and wrong, in his thoughts and actions. As the Qur'an describes: By the Soul and the order given to it; and its inspiration as to its wrong and its right; truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it! (Ash-Shams – 91:7–10).

But as the guidance of that natural guide is not clear, and there are other powers that induce and attract man from within and without toward bad deeds. Its guidance is not enough to steer man through innumerable wrong ways to the right path; therefore God sent His messengers to help man's inner guide with the light of knowledge, and whatever signals the inner guide gives toward right things are highlighted through clear signs.

This is the essence of messengers' prophetic mission. Those chosen persons (peace be upon them) who had been appointed for this mission had been endowed by God with special knowledge and insight; through this gifted knowledge, they were able to know the reality of those things in which

people differ. Moreover, through the light of knowledge they were able to distinguish the right path from the wrong ways.

The Difference Between the Messenger and Other Leaders

Man has accepted the necessity of a guide in all times. It has never been claimed that mere guidance by the inner guide is sufficient for man. The guidance position has always been given to forefathers, elders of a nation, tribe, and family, teachers, scholars, reformers, religious and political leaders and they have been followed because of their trustworthiness. But the thing which distinguishes the messenger from leaders of other kinds is the "knowledge." The leaders of other kinds have no real knowledge; they form opinions on the basis of conjecture and are influenced by their desires and passion. Because of this, whatever dogmas and laws they frame are a mixture of truth and falsehood and are deprived of pure and complete truth. The Qur'an warns repeatedly about this fact:

> They follow nothing but conjecture; and what the souls desire! (An-Najm – 53:23)
>
> But they have no knowledge therein. They follow nothing but conjecture, and conjecture avails nothing against Truth. (An-Najm – 53:28)
>
> Nay, the wrongdoers (merely) follow their own desires, being devoid of knowledge. But who will guide those whom Allah leaves astray? To them will be no helpers. (Ar-Rum – 30:29)
>
> Yet there is among men such a one as disputes about Allah, without knowledge, without guidance, and without a book of enlightenment, (disdainfully) bending his side in order to lead (men) astray. (Al-Hajj – 22:8–9)
>
> And who is more astray than one who follows his own lust devoid of guidance from Allah? (Al-Qasas – 28:50)

On the contrary, the knowledge that the messenger has is given to him by God. The guidance of the messenger is not based on his own conjecture and desire, it is based on the light of knowledge, which he receives from God and through that

light, he sees the right path clearly and guides people to that path. Because of this, wherever the Qur'an relates the event of appointment of a chosen person as God's messenger (*Rasul*), it mentions that he has been given the knowledge (*Al-Ilm*). For example, the announcement of appointing Abraham (peace be upon him) as God's messenger was made with these words: The Qur'an relates it with the words of Abraham (peace be upon him): O my father, to me has come knowledge which has not reached you, so follow me: I will guide you to a way that is even and straight (Maryam – 19:43).

The appointment of Lut (peace be upon him) as messenger of God has been declared with these words: And to Lut, too, We gave judgment and knowledge (Al-Anbiyaa – 21:74).

The Qur'an says about Moses (peace be upon him), "When he reached full age and was firmly established (in life), We bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge" (Al-Qasas – 28:14).

The event of appointment of David and Solomon (peace be upon them) has been related by the Qur'an in these words, "To each of them We gave judgment and knowledge (Al-Anbiyaa – 21:79).

The Qur'an addressed Muhammad (peace be upon them) in these words: Were you to follow their desires after the knowledge which has reached you, then would you find neither protector nor helper against Allah (Al-Baqarah – 2:120).

After explaining the distinctive status of the messengers against the other leaders, we have to draw our attention to the fundamental matters stated by the Qur'an about the prophetic mission.

The Relation Between Belief in God and Belief in Messengers

The first thing is that while the messenger of God has the exclusive source of knowledge that is out of reach of people, and he has been endowed with the light of insight of which people are deprived, then the only right concept about God will be then presented by the messenger. If anyone establishes a belief about God on the basis of his own pondering, it has little validity. Alternatively, if he follows the teachings of other wise

men and scholars, then neither his belief about God will be right nor will he be able to have the true knowledge about the hidden truths. The conclusion is that the truth and correctness of all beliefs solely and totally depends on the belief in messengers of God. Because of that the Qur'an insists frequently on the belief in messengers. As the Qur'an says:

> How many populations that insolently opposed the commands of their Lord and His messengers. Did we not then call to account; to severe account? And we Chastised them with a horrible chastisement. (At-Talaq – 65:8)

> Those who deny Allah and the messengers, and wish to separate between Allah and His messengers, saying: "We believe in some but reject others," and wish to take a course midway; they are in truth unbelievers; and We have prepared for unbelievers humiliating punishment. To those who believe in Allah and His messengers and make no distinction between any of the messengers, We shall soon give their (due) rewards for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (An-Nisaa – 4:150–152)

> If anyone contends with the messenger even after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, and follows a path other than that becoming to men to faith. We shall leave him in the path he has chosen, and land him in Hell, what an evil refuge! (An-Nisaa – 4:115)

This and more than a hundred similar verses are found in the Qur'an in which it has been clearly said that belief in God and belief in messengers are inseparable. Anyone who refuses to believe in messengers and their guidance, whether he believes in God or not, is a deviator, because whatever belief is formed without knowledge, that will not be true, even if be the belief in the oneness of God.

Unity in Word

The other point is that the belief in messengers is the only thing, which can unite the whole humanity in one belief. In fact, the real base of dissension is ignorance. It is obvious that if people don't have knowledge about a particular thing, they

will form their opinion by conjecturing, and naturally dissensions will arise among them about that thing, because conjecturing is like groping in darkness.

If 50 people come out from darkness, after groping for a particular thing, they would give 50 opinions about the thing they were searching for in darkness. But this difference of opinion will be dissolved as soon as the light comes because everybody will be able to see the thing with their own eyes, and they will reach the same conclusion.

While the messengers have been given knowledge and the light of insight, it seems impossible they will differ among themselves and teach different things and different ways of life to people. Therefore, the Qur'an says the messengers belong to one single group, their teachings are the same, their way of life is the same, and all of them call people toward the same right path

It is incumbent on a believer to believe in all messengers of God. One who refuses to believe in any one of the messengers in fact rejects all, and he will be deprived of belief, because the teaching which has been rejected by him is not the teaching of a particular messenger, it is the teaching of all the messengers. As the Qur'an says:

> O you messenger! enjoy (all things good and pure), and work righteousness; for I am acquainted with (all) that you do. And verily this *Ummah* of yours is a single *Ummah* and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore fear Me (and no other). But people have cut off their affair (of unity), between them, into sects; each party rejoices in that which is with itself. (Al-Muminun – 23:51–53)

> We have sent you inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him: We sent inspiration to Abraham, Isma'il, Issaq, Jacob, and the tribe. To Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave Psalms. Of some messengers: We have already told you the story, of others We have not; and to Moses Allah spoke direct. (An-Nisaa – 4:163–164)

This and like this many other verses of the Qur'an show that all messengers of God have been calling to the same only way of truth, and they have been sent to every nation. The Qur'an says, "To every people (was sent) a messenger" (Yunus – 10:47). "And to every people a guide" (Ar-Ra'd – 13:7).

Those messengers who have been listed in the Qur'an clearly and manifestly, it is incumbent to believe in them, and believe manifestly. As far as those messengers are concerned whose names have not been mentioned, the true belief about them is that all of them were calling toward Islam, but their people corrupted their teachings, and by differing among themselves made their own religions separately. We cannot say that Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, Confucius, and others were messengers, because the Qur'an has not mentioned their names. However, we believe that God has surely sent His messengers to India, China, Japan, Iran, Africa, Europe, and all other countries of the world, and all of them called their people toward Islam, the same way of life toward which the last messenger of God Muhammad (peace be upon him) called the whole humanity. So we do not reject any religious leader of any people but we reject those ways of life that are other than the right path of Islam.

Regarding messengers, the teaching of Islam is unique. There is no match for it in other religions. This is the clear sign about the Qur'an's truth, and it contains a soothing message for human unity and for uniting humankind by one word (belief).

Following and Obedience of the Messenger

The inevitable requirement of the belief in messengers is to follow them and obey them, and this following should not be confined only to beliefs and acts of worship it should be in all lifestyles. The believer has to follow the right path shown by the messengers. Because the messengers were given the knowledge and insight through which they were able to distinguish the right path from the wrong ways with certainty. So whatever they have prohibited or commanded them to do, it is from God. It is a fact that people do not succeed fully in distinguishing right from wrong despite their experience of

years even of centuries. Whatever little success they have achieved in this regard, it is not on the basis of firm belief, it is out of their presumptions, and reasoning from induction, that in all conditions it is liable to error. On the contrary, the ways shown by the messengers have no possibility of mistake because they have been prescribed on the basis of the knowledge given by God. That is why the Qur'an enjoins emphatically obedience and following of messengers and calls their way of life the right path and *Shariah* (the law prescribed by God), and admonishes them to abandon the following of all other leaders, and to obey and follow only messengers of God, because obedience, the messenger is correct obedience of God. The Qur'an says,

> We sent not a messenger but to be obeyed in accordance with the leave of Allah. (An-Nisaa – 4:64)
>
> He who obeys the messenger obeys Allah. (An-Nisaa – 4:80)
>
> Say: If you do love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. Say: Obey Allah and His messenger; but if they turn back, Allah loves not those who reject faith. (Al-i-Imran – 3:31–32)
>
> O you who believe! Obey Allah and His messenger, and turn not away from him when you hear (him speak) nor be like those who say, "we hear" but listen not: for the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are the deaf and dumb, those who understand not. (Al-Anfal – 8:20–22)
>
> It is not fitting for believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His messenger, to have any option about their decision: if anyone disobeys Allah and His messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong path. (Al-Ahzab – 33:36)
>
> But if they hearken not to you, know that they only follow their lusts; and who is more astray than one who follows his own lusts, devoid of guidance from Allah? For Allah guides not people given to wrongdoing. (Al-Qasas – 28:50)

Like this there are many verses in which the Qur'an has emphasized on the following and obedience the messenger. Then, in chapter Al-Ahzab it has been stated that the life of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the role model for those who have hope for forgiveness from Allah and success in the hereafter. As the Qur'an says, "You have indeed in the messenger of Allah an excellent example for him who hopes in Allah and the final day and who remember Allah much" (Al-Ahzab – 33:21).

The Importance of Belief in Messengership

The belief in messengers is the soul and source of vitality for Islamic civilization and also the real foundation of its distinguished characteristics. For every civilization and system of culture three things are regarded as its foundation. First: the way of thinking; second: moral principles; third: laws for civic life. All civilizations of the world receive these three things from three different sources. The source for the way of thinking is the great thinkers whose influence over large groups of people is established. Moral principles are derived from those reformers and leaders who have ruled various nations in their times. Civic laws are framed by those in whom people have trust, because of their skill and ability in different sections of life. The cultural system built in this way is inevitably flawed by three defects in its foundation.

Here, we would like to have a critical look at the three basic sources through which a civilization derives its way of thinking, moral principles, and civic laws.

First, let us take the thinkers and philosophers; that is the source of the way of thinking. These thinkers are great in number, and their ways of thinking are different. There are differences among them over fundamental problems faced by human beings. Generally, these philosophers are thinkers of the type who have never come in contact with the practical problems of the people; most of them are even labelled as misanthropic.

The second source is the reformers, leaders, and priests who are the source for moral principles. They also differ vastly among themselves in thoughts and understanding. The only thing that seems common among them is that they live in their own Utopia, swayed by their tempestuous obsessions, and they have the least touch with the concrete practical problems of the people.

The third source is of the technologists and skilful persons who frame civic laws; they also differ among themselves in their approaches and perceptions. They too have one thing in common, and that is hardheartedness which is the result of their dogged implementation of laws without considering the more delicate human problems.

The three elements (way of thinking, moral principles, civic laws) derived from the three sources (philosophers, reformers, technologists) are deprived of long life and ability of expansion; moreover, different nations are influenced by different thinkers, leaders, and law givers, so naturally the differences appear in their way of thinking, moral principles, and their civic laws. The other thing is that with the passing of time and changing of circumstances, new philosophers, reformers, and leaders take over and their fresh influences prevail in their present own period and people.

In this way the civilizations become national civilizations, and through their differences appear a terrible confrontation, which proves to be a lightning bolt that burns the whole harvest of peace. On the other hand, with the passing of time, each national civilization is affected by fundamental changes that sometimes entail evolution and sometimes toward revolution.

One vital aspect is that the three-sources discussed above, and the three elements derived from them, have no sanctity in them. Because the way of thinking given by the thinkers, the laws framed by the legislators, and the moral principles prescribed by the reformers are all the result of human efforts, and people know it very well that the following of and abiding by man-made laws and principles has never been perfect. If people abide by the laws, they do not do so wholeheartedly,

and their hearts remain empty of belief and spirit. They know that there is a possibility of mistakes in the fundamentals of their civilizations, and they always feel the necessity of correction in them. Moreover, their experiences prove that legacy of mistakes exists, which increases their doubts. Consequently the laws, principles, and the system of the culture cannot attain stability.

The civilization which is built on the belief in messengers is clear of all the three drawbacks mentioned above.

The first thing is that this civilization derives all three elements (way of thinking, moral principles, laws for social life) from a single source. There is only one source who gives a way of thinking, moral principles, and civic laws as well. He has the pivotal position in the whole system. He looks without discrimination at all the problems that arise in all three sections of life. He takes a proportionate quantity from thinking, tender feelings, and practical wisdom, and mixes them in the mixture of civilization in such a way that all the elements become just and proportionate; naturally, the disposition of the mixture becomes very moderate. This great task is beyond man's power and will not be possible without the guidance of our Creator, God.

The other thing is that this civilization is without any elements of a particular nation or period. Whatever laws and principles are given by the messenger of God are not based on inclinations of a particular nation and time, instead they are based on truth, and truth is above all limitations and differentiations of the east or west, black or white, ancient or modern, Assyrian or Aryan. Whatever is truth, it is the truth in all parts of the world, in all nations and times. Sun is sun whether it shines in Japan or in Gibraltar. The Sun was called Sun a thousand years ago and it will be called Sun after a thousand years. So any civilization which can become a universal and a lasting civilization of the human race is the civilization established by the messenger of God (peace be upon him). This is the only civilization which is suitable for

every nation and time with its unchangeable and eternal principles.

One other aspect of this civilization is that it has the full grandeur of sanctity. Its follower believes that the person who established this civilization is the messenger of God. He has the knowledge given by God, which has not an atom of doubt. His (peace be upon him) words are clear from conjecture, desire and selfish urges. Whatever he presents is from God. There is no possibility of his going astray, as the Qur'an says,

> Your companion is neither astray nor being misled, nor does he say (anything) of (his own) desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him: he was taught by one mighty in power. (An-Najm – 53:2–5)

When this belief is rooted deep in the heart of a messenger's follower then he will follow and obey him with peace of mind and full satisfaction, and he will have no doubt in his heart. The fear if this way is the right path or not, or if there may be some other way, which is the right way, or better than this, will never disturb his mind. It is obvious that the civilization which has followers of such firm belief will be a well-established and very strong civilization and it will have a discipline stronger than other worldly civilizations. Moreover, its way of thinking, moral principles, and civic laws will have more stability.

All of God's messengers were the builders of this same civilization. For centuries, they worked hard to prepare the ground for this. When the ground was ready, the last messenger of God, Muhammad (peace be upon him), came and completed the building.

The Distinctive Characteristics of Muhammad's Mission

Up to this point, whatever has been discussed was related to the general aspects of prophetic mission. But there are some other aspects that are especially related to the prophetic mission of God's last messenger, Muhammad (peace be upon him). As far as the status of messenger is concerned, there is no distinction between Muhammad (peace be upon him) and other messengers (peace be upon them), all are equal. The Holy

Qur'an has clearly declared that the distinction between messengers is not legitimate. The Qur'an says, "We make no distinction (they say) between one another of His messengers" (Al-Baqarah – 2:285).

According to this principle, all messengers are equal. God sent them all. All were given knowledge and wisdom by God. All of them were called to the same right path, Islam. All are guides and leaders for mankind. The obedience of all the messengers is incumbent on man. The life of each messenger is the role model to man. However, practically God has distinguished Muhammad (peace be upon him) over other messengers, with some special features. This distinction of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not an ordinary thing that neglecting it or considering it brings no effect. This distinction has a fundamental position within the Islamic system of beliefs. Practically all Islamic beliefs and laws rest on this distinction of the prophetic mission of Muhammad (peace be upon him). Therefore one's belief in messengership cannot be complete until he believes in the special distinction of Muhammad's prophetic mission.

The Distinction Between Muhammad's Messengership and That of Others

For the sake of understanding this subject, we should be clear on a few points and hence we are discussing them one by one in the following lines.

1. According to the verses of the Qur'an, authentic traditions, and reasoning the number of messengers must exceed thousands, as the Qur'an says, "Verily We have sent you with truth, as a bearer of glad tidings, and as a warner: and there never was a people without a Warner having lived among them (in the past)" (Fatir – 35:24).

It is obvious that so many nations lived on the earth and passed away, history and its scope was unable to cover them, and it will never be able to do so. If so, the number of messengers must exceed thousands. Some of the traditions (*Ahadith*) also support it, the number mentioned in those

traditions is 1,24,000. However, names of the messengers mentioned in the Qur'an can be counted on the fingers. If we include other religious leaders of different nations in this number, though there is no mention of them in the Qur'an, in that case also the number may exceed by scores. The names and memories of innumerable messengers have sunk into oblivion; it shows that God had sent them for a particular nation and age and they had not been given any gift, which last for a long time and become universal.

2. Further the messengers, and religious leaders whose names are known to us, their teachings have been corrupted, and their lives have been mythified in such a way that our knowledge about them borders on ignorance. Whatever information about them is available, if it is scrutinized on the accepted standard of assessing historical events, then we would have to accept that there is nothing in them to be trusted. Even we cannot specify their period with certainty, we are unaware of their names. We cannot even say with certainty whether they ever lived in this world or not. The historians have expressed doubt even about famous historical personalities; they are skeptical about them, whether they are historical personalities, or the product of people's imagination. Then, whatever record we have about their lives is so meagre and vague that it cannot be taken as a role model for any section of human life. The same may be said about their teachings. The teachings attributed to them, according to the chronology, do not match together moreover, the internal and external evidence shows that their teachings have been corrupted widely. These points suffice to believe that the prophethood, and leadership of all the messengers and religious leaders who came before Muhammad (peace be upon him) has come to an end.

3. It has been proved about all messengers and religious leaders that their teachings were especially for their own nations. This has been said by some of them and proved about some of them by historical events. The teachings of messengers of God Abraham and Moses (peace be upon him) and of the religious leaders Confucius, Zoroaster, and Krishna remained

within their own nations. This is true about the teachings of the messengers, and the religious leaders of the Samarian and Aryan nations too. Of course, the teachings of messenger of God, Christ (peace be upon him), and the religious leader Buddha reached other nations through their followers, but they themselves neither promoted it nor claimed that their teachings were for the whole world. On the contrary, the Gospel quotes the saying of Christ (peace be upon him) that he was sent only to guide the children of Israel (Bani Israil).

4. Among all messengers and religious leaders, Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the only messenger whose life and teachings are sound in all respects, and the information available about his life and teachings is so authentically correct and true that it leaves no room for any doubt. It can be said without fear of refutation that there is no historical personality that can be mentioned, or the stock of information about him so authentic, correct, and reliable, as Muhammad's (peace be upon him). If any skeptic doubts the authenticity of the information about Muhammad (peace be upon him), he would have to burn the whole stock of world history, because when such an authentic historical record becomes the subject of skepticism, we must accept that the whole stock of history is nothing but a heap of lies and not a single word of it is trustworthy.

5. It is a fact that among all messengers and leaders only Muhammad is the person whose life, character, and conduct (and the facts about his historical role with minutest details) are available. There is no historical personality whose account has been preserved with so much detail in the pages of history except Muhammad's life. In the books of traditions ('Ahadith), and on his life even today, we can observe him as closely as his companions used to see him in their time. Though he is not present physically; with the detailed record of his life he is present, and he will be alive as long as the pages of history about his life exist. In brief, it can be said that among the messengers only he can be followed in all parts of life because his life is a complete role model.

6. The same thing can be said about the teachings of Muhammad (peace be upon him). As it has been said in the above lines, there is no one among the messengers whose book and teachings are available in their original form and can be authentically attributed to him. This honour has been given only to Muhammad (peace be upon him). The book he brought, the Holy Qur'an, is available today with the same original words he presented to people. Besides the Qur'an, the teachings imparted by him in his own words also are safe in their correct form and with the will of God will remain safe forever, so he is the only messenger who can be followed with full trust and firm belief.

7. The other distinction of Muhammad's messengership is its completeness and all-encompassing nature. Whatever pure models of truth, goodness, good conduct, and honest dealing are found in all messengers and religious leaders can be found in Muhammad's life (peace be upon him). All the fine things that may be found in the leaders who came after him can be found in Muhammad (peace be upon him). Moreover, you will find in Muhammad's life and his teachings the true knowledge, righteousness, and ways of goodness in abundance which you cannot find in any leader of past or future. So it is a fact that cannot be denied that Muhammad's life and teachings are "composed of all good things." Whatever truth is, it has been manifested by Muhammad (peace be upon him). He showed the way clearly that is called the right path. He presented all the true ways and principles that were necessary to keep all individual and collective conduct and dealings right.

8. Mohammad (peace be upon him) is the only messenger who declared that his call is to the whole humanity, and in fact it happened that he sent massages to the kings of the various nations. The message of Muhammad (peace be upon him) reached all the corners of the world and every nation of the world. No one has been given this distinction except Muhammad. No messenger and religious leader has claimed that his message is for the whole world. Of course, the message of some of them became universal but they themselves did not

claim that their message was for the whole world. No one except Muhammad (peace be upon him) claimed that his call is to the whole universe. He struggled for it, and his message became universal.

9. The possible reasons for sending the messengers are three. The first might be that no messenger has been sent to a particular nation, and it needs to be sent to them by one or two messengers. The second is that the teaching of a messenger has been wiped out or corrupted to the worst, and it was not possible for the people to follow these teachings. The third is that the teaching and guidance of past messenger or messengers are incomplete and further addition is needed. There is no fourth reason, nor reasonably can it be possible.

The position of messengership is not just an honour that is given to someone as a reward for his good works. It is a special service for which a chosen person is appointed to fulfil a fundamental need of people. It is not necessary to send a messenger to a nation while it already has a messenger, his teachings are safe and intact, there is no deficiency in his teachings, and no addition is needed.

Moreover, the position of messengership is not such a low and unimportant position that may be created just to draw the attention of people toward the teachings of their messenger who, after completing his mission, passes away from the world. For this purpose, a number of true scholars are enough, who can perform the task of the revival of their religion.

In brief, reason has given its absolute verdict that no messenger is sent until one of the three causes arises. And it has been proved above that all three causes not in effect relate to the messengership of Muhammad (peace be upon him). As his message is for the whole humanity, there is no further need of sending messengers to nations of the world separately. The book he brought and his life as a role model both have been preserved in their original form. Because of that, there is no need of a new book or a new guidance. Teachings and guidance of Muhammad (peace be upon him) are complete and all-embracing, he did not hide anything of the true knowledge

and he presented his life as a best example for his followers. They find in his life a complete role model for all of their righteous deeds. There is no need of any messenger to add something to his teachings. While there is no reason for sending a new messenger, we have to accept that the door of messengership has been closed forever. Were the door kept open, it would mean that God does redundant acts, while He is ever and absolutely free from all extravagance and imperfection.

This is the distinct position of the messengership of Muhammad (peace be upon him) the Holy Book Qur'an has treated it in detail. It says,

> Say: O men! I am sent unto you all, as the messenger of Allah, to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: there is no God but He: it is He that gives both life and death so believe in Allah and His messenger. The unlettered prophet, who believes in Allah and His words: follow him that (so) you may be guided. (Al-A'raf – 7:158)
>
> We have not sent you but as a (messenger) to all mankind, giving them glad tidings and warning them (against sin), but most men know not. (Saba – 34:28)
>
> O mankind! The messenger has come to you in truth from Allah: believe in him: it is best for you. But if you reject Faith, to Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth: and Allah is All-knowing, All-wise. (An-Nisaa – 4:170)
>
> We sent you not, but as a mercy for all creatures. (Al-Anbiyaa – 21:107)
>
> Blessed is He Who sent down the Criterion to His servant, that he may be a warner for (everyone in) the Universe. (Al-Furqan – 25:1)

By studying these verses a few points emerge:

The first: The call of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not confined to a particular period of time and nation, instead he is the leader and guide forever, and for the whole mankind.

The second: It is obligatory for the whole mankind to believe in Muhammad and follow him.

The third: Without believing in the Messengership of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and without following him, no one will be able to benefit from the guidance.

These three things are an integral part of beliefs (*Imaniat*) because the human civilization that Islam wants to establish as universal is based on these three beliefs. Even a hypothetical acceptance that the guidance can be sought outside the religion of Muhammad (peace be upon him) would spell impairment of the status of Islam as a universal religion.

The Perfection of the Religion

The other distinction of Muhammad's (peace be upon him) messengership declared by the Qur'an can be noted in the following verses:

> It is He Who has sent His messenger with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, to cause it to prevail over all religion, even though the pagans may detest it. (At-Tauba – 9:33)

> This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. (Al-Maidah – 5:3)

Through these verses of the Qur'an, we come to know that the guidance and the true religion has been sent through Muhammad (peace be upon him) in its perfect and complete form, and his prophetic mission has achieved its dominion over all religion. The religion has been made perfect through him, and the grace of guidance that human being was receiving in piecemeal through past messengers now has been perfected and completed. After this, there is nothing left wanting in the guidance, the religion and the true knowledge, that might necessitate the agency of fresh messenger. The clear declaration of the perfection of the religion takes us to a logical conclusion, and it is that the relation of the following and obedience to the past messengerships should be disconnected, and the door of a new messengership must be closed forever.

These two things, cancellation of past religion and the finality of Muhammad's messengership, are distinctive characteristics of his prophetic mission. The Qur'an has clearly mentioned them.

The Cancellation of Previous Religions

Cancellation of previous religions meant that whatever had been presented by the past messengers now stands cancelled. Though it is necessary to believe in their messengership and in its truth, since their call was toward Islam, and to believe in them is to believe in Islam, but practically there is no relevance of obedience and following them now. It belongs only to the teachings of Muhammad (peace be upon him), and following his examples. For, when you have got a perfect thing, you do not need an incomplete thing any more. The other thing is that the teachings and the record of previous messengers have been corrupted, and have gone into oblivion, because of which to follow them with perfection is no more possible. Therefore, wherever the Qur'an gives a command to obey the messenger it uses the words "the messenger," or "the prophet"; *An-Nabi* or *Ar-Rasul* means the last messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him). As the Qur'an says:

> And obey Allah and the messenger that you may obtain mercy. (Al-i-Imran – 3:132)
>
> O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the messenger, and those charged with authority among you. (An-Nisaa – 4:59)
>
> He who obeys the Messenger obeys Allah. (An-Nisaa – 4:80)

Because of this, the nations who believed in former messengers also have been commanded to believe in Muhammad (peace be upon him) and obey him, as the Qur'an says,

> O people of the book! There has come to you, Our messenger, revealing to you much that you used to hide in the book, and passing over much (that is now unnecessary): there has come to you from Allah a (new) light and a

> perspicuous book. Wherewith Allah guides all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety and leads them out of darkness, by His Will, unto the light guides, them to a path that is straight. (Al-Maidah – 5:15–16)
>
> Those who follow the messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures) in the Taurat (Old Testament) and the Gospel: for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil: he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure): he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them so it is those who believe in him, honour him, help him, and follow the light which is sent down to him; it is they who will prosper.
>
> Say: 'O men! I am sent unto you all as the messenger of Allah, to whom belongs the dominions of heavens and the earth: there is no God but He: it is He that gives both life and death. So believe in Allah and His messenger the unlettered prophet, who believes in Allah and His Words: follow him that (so) you may be guided.' (Al-A'raf – 7:157–158)

In the verses quoted above, the abolition of former religions has clearly been declared. Its meaning, reason, and consequent effects have also been explained. It has been warned that now the guidance and the salvation is strongly related to the following of unlettered Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him). It has been explained too that the religion of Muhammad (peace be upon him) in fact amends and completes the religions of Taurat (Old Testament) and Gospel.

The Finality of Messengership

In the same way, the other effect of the completion of the religion, in other words, "finality of the messengership" has also been declared clearly by the Qur'an: Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the messenger of Allah, and seal of the prophets, and Allah has full knowledge of all things (Al-Ahzab – 33:40).

This declaration about the closing of the door of messengership is so clear that no room can be allowed in Islam for a new messengership; only a person whose heart is corrupt can do this. The word "khatim" (seal) used by the Qur'an whether it is read with "fathah" (the vowel point in Arabic) or with "kasrah" (another vowel point in Arabic) in both cases the result is the same and that is, the door of messengership has been closed forever in the knowledge of God, and it is the fact that nothing is possible to happen in the universe that is beyond the knowledge of God.

The Integral Parts of Muhammad's Messengership

Perfection of the religion, abolition of former religions, and finality of messengership, all these three beliefs are integral parts of the Islamic faith. The open call of Islam is founded on its perfection and completeness; in other words, the religion brought by Muhammad (peace be upon him) has already filled whatever lack was in the former religions, and now there is no lack, which needs a new religion and a new messenger to fill it. This, the perfect religion, has drawn a line between Islam and paganism, truth and falsehood, that clearly distinguish, each from the other, and there is no need of any addition or deletion in it, ever. Whatever is Islam and whatever is truth has been presented by Muhammad (peace be upon him), and nothing of this kind is to come. Whatever has been declared unbelief and false by Muhammad (peace be upon him) that is unbelief and false forever. This is the firm and eternal foundation on which the whole edifice of the Islamic civilization has been built. The purpose of the selection of this foundation is to bring all people of the world together to one religion, one civilization and one following.

But this kind of unity cannot be established until people believe that the faith that they are following is perfect, total truth, and its guidance encompasses their whole life, and they should not have any doubt that the edifice of civilization built on this foundation has no possibility of breaking up. On such firm belief and strong trust depends Islam's stability and its call becomes a popular call.

Whoever says that even after Islam the following of forme religions is also correct, in fact, he wants to snatch the right fron Islam of calling all of humanity toward its way of life, because if it were possible to seek guidance from other ways, then callin all nations of the world toward Islam would be absurd.

And whoever holds that, according to the requirements an vagaries of the time, adding and deleting something from th teachings of Muhammad is admissible, wants to deprive Islan of its fundamental characteristic of being everlasting. If an religion is imperfect and needs adding or deleting to make i complete, then its claim that it is the guidance for all times wil be false.

Anyone who says that even after Muhammad there is roon for a new messenger strikes at the stability of Islam. Keepin the door of messengership open means keeping the door o division open.

One of the most dangerous or fatal attempts to cut the root of Islam would be the claim of messengership by some on else in Islam.

If someone claims to be a messenger, and says "to believ in Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not enough, and a belie in his newly avowed messengership is also necessary, an whoever does not believe in the latter is an unbeliever (*Kafir*), he is an imposter. In this way the imposter will create divisio among Muslims, by segregating their prayers, cutting th matrimonial relations, even destroying the social activities lik visiting of the sick, taking part in condolence and burial Think! Who can be a more deadly enemy to Islamic unity an civilization than he.

From this discussion it can be very well understood tha along with the belief in Muhammad's (peace be upon him messengership, how important it is to believe in the perfectio of the religion, the abolition of former religions, and th finality of messengership. How crucial it is for the stability and survival of Islam, to believe in these three features are th fundamental and integral parts of Islamic faith.

Belief in Books of God

In Islamic terms "book" means the Book that is sent down by God through a messenger to guide human beings. According to that definition, "book" is the official statement, or in Islamic terminology it is called the "Word of God." The messenger is the person who is appointed to explain it and bring it into practice. This is not the place to discuss how God speaks or what is the nature of His word. This is purely a subject of metaphysics that does not relate to this discussion. We have to ponder over this subject through a particular point of view and that is: What part does the "belief in books" play in establishing Islamic civilization? In this regard, it is enough to know that whatever God wills to teach to His slaves, He sends it down as inspiration in the heart of messenger who is entrusted by God to explain His words to His slaves. The words of the message with their meanings are purely of God. The messenger has no power of adding or deleting anything from it. His sole responsibility is to convey the message of God to His slaves, as it is. Whatever guidance God sends down is not influenced by messenger's thinking, desire and will. The book contains words purely from God. The messenger delivers the Lord's message to His slaves as a trustworthy envoy. Then with the wisdom and insight given by God, he explains the message, and on the principles given by God in His Book, he establishes a system for people's social and moral life and for their culture and civilization. He brings revolutionary changes in people's way of thinking and their conduct by preaching and educating them and presenting to them his own example. He inculcates in people's soul and heart piety, cleanliness, purity, and righteousness. And also organizes them in such a way that they turn themselves into a new society with a fresh way of thinking about concepts and opinions, conducts and etiquette, laws and rules. When he passes away from this world, he leaves behind him God's Book, purely in God's words, his

explanations and teachings in his own words; and his life and novel example which becomes stream of light and guidance for the people, and for their future progenies.

The Relation Between Book and Messengership

Messengership and the Book both are from God the Only One. Both are an integral part of God's Will, and they have the same purpose and the same calling. Both the Book and the messengership contain the same knowledge and wisdom given to them by God. The Book has the teachings in words while its practical model is the messenger's life.

The nature of a human being is such that he cannot be much benefited merely by the teaching of the Book, he also needs a teacher and guide who can instil the knowledge in his mind and moreover, with his own practical model, can mould his thinking and character according to the goal of God's teachings (His Book).

In all of human history you will not find a single instance of any revolutionary change in the minds and lives of people, merely through a book, without the guidance and teaching of a guide and leader. Those leaders who brought about great revolutions in their nation's thoughts and lives, had their lives not been a complete example of their own teachings, they could not have brought about such revolutions merely through their books alone.

On the other hand, human nature demands an authentic guidebook together with its teacher and guide, whether it may be in written form or be preserved in the memory of people. It is the fact that the principles that are the bases of thoughts and practices, morality and culture; if they cannot be preserved in their original form, the print of the teachings gradually becomes dull in people's mind. Consequently, the foundation of individual character, collective setup, and laws becomes weak. At last, nothing will be left with the people except stories, which would not have strength to save a vast civilization from falling. That is why the followers of those leaders whose teachings could not be preserved have gone

astray. The nation organized by them fell into all kinds of conceptual, practical, moral, and cultural wrongs. They lost those principles upon which, once, in the beginning, they were organized.

The Creator of the universe was very well aware of the nature of human beings, therefore He sent down a messenger with His Book. He appointed the persons of best character as His messenger and guide, and revealed His words to the messengers, so that the demands of human nature could be met. Had the messengers come without the book or the book sent without a messenger, in both cases the purpose of wisdom would not have been served.

The Qur'anic Simile of Leader and Light

The Qur'an has presented the relation of the Book and messengership by a simile. The Qur'an, at various places, calls the messenger of God as leader or guide, who shows people the right path, and to those who have lost their straight path and are groping in darkness, leads them in the right direction and on the right path. As the Qur'an says,

> And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by our command, and We inspired them to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to give Zakat, and they constantly served Us (and Us only). (Al-Anbiyaa – 21:73)

> And to every people a guide. (Ar-Ra'd – 13:7)

> O my father, to me has come knowledge which has not reached you, so follow me: I will guide you to a way that is even and straight. (Maryam – 19:43)

> And that I guide you to your Lord, so you should fear Him. (An-Nazi'at – 79:19)

On the other hand, the Qur'an calls the Book by different names, like "the Light," "Brightness," "Evidence," "Criterion," "Shining," "Clear." As the Qur'an says,

> And follow the light which has sent down with him, it is they who will prosper. (Al-A'raf – 7:157)

> In the past We granted to Moses and Aaron the Criterion (for judgment). And a light and a message for those who would do right. (Al-Anbiyaa – 21:48)
>
> There has come to you from Allah a (new) light and a plain book. (Al-Maidah – 5:15)
>
> O mankind! Verily there has come to you a convincing proof from your Lord for We have sent unto you a light (that is) manifest. (An-Nisaa – 4:174)

These metaphors are not merely poetic figures of speech, on the contrary, they point toward an important fact that an ordinary man cannot get enough light and guidance through reason and experience to find the right path of truth. In this dark, unknown domain he needs an extraordinary guide who is well aware of the ups and downs, customs and usages of the journey; moreover he must carry a lamp so that he will be able to warn the travellers where a ditch is, and where the road is slippery, where thorny bushes, are, and where crooked, wrong ways cross.

The availability of an expert guide with a lamp in his hand will help the travellers to see for themselves the ups and downs of the road; moreover, they will follow him with more confidence, knowing that even if he is not very well aware of the way himself, he carries a lamp which illuminates the road for them. What the relation is between the dark night and the light is the same as between a messenger and the book.

Take another scenario: if we snatch the lamp from the hand of the guide and start our journey without a guide, would we be able to reach the destination without being lost? No, in this case, there would be a possibility of going astray, because we may reach an intersection and stop, confused about choosing the right way, and we may take the wrong way in the beam of the lamp. It is a fact that merely the lamp cannot make us independent of a guide.

On the contrary, if we embark on a journey with a guide who has no lamp in his hand, we would have no choice but to blindly follow him in the darkness, and we would not be able to develop in ourselves confidence and insight to distinguish

the right way from the wrong, or even beware of potholes in the way that would require extra cautiousness.

With this discussion it is clear that in the darkness and on unknown ways we cannot dispense with a guide or a lamp, either. We urgently need both of them.

In the same way, when we start on a search for truth, the light of our reason alone will not work. We will be in need of the book and messenger equally. We will never find the right path if we do not follow these two.

The messenger is an expert guide who, through the knowledge and insight given by God, knows the needs and purposes of this journey, the Holy Book Qur'an gives different names to the ability and expertise of messengers, as "judgment," "knowledge," "expansion of the heart," "teaching," and "guidance." The Qur'an says,

> Have We not expanded thee thy breast? (Al-Sharh – 94:1)
>
> For Allah has sent down to you the book and wisdom and taught you what you knew not (before). (An-Nisaa – 4:113)
>
> (of them) We gave judgment and knowledge. (Al-Anbiyaa – 21:79)
>
> Obey those who ask no reward of you (for themselves) and who are themselves guided. (Ya-Sin – 36:21)

The Book is an illuminated lamp; with the help of it, the messenger leads people on the right path, and he benefits them with the same light of knowledge that has been given to him by God in abundance. The messenger enables people with his teaching and training to follow in his footprints, in his physical absence, and by keeping the lamp (the Book) to find the right path even to become leader and guide of others. As the Qur'an says,

> A.L.R. A Book which We have revealed unto you in order that you might lead mankind out of the depths of darkness into light – by the leave of their Lord – to the way of (Him) the exalted in Power Worthy of all praise! (Ibrahim – 14:1)

> (We sent them) with clean signs and scriptures and We have sent down unto you (also) the message; that you may explain clearly to men what is sent for them, and that they may give thought. (An-Nahl – 16:44)

Then it has been indicated by the Qur'an in a delicate style of expression that lamp and guide appear to be two different things in our material world, otherwise in the world of reality the Book and the messenger are not two different things, they are one. Both are deeply related to each other, therefore, the Qur'an at one place compares the messenger with a particular thing, and at another place it compares the Book with the same thing. As the Qur'an says,

> O Prophet! Truly We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of glad tidings, and a Warner, and as one who invites to Allah's (grace) by His leave, and as a lamp spreading light. (Al-Ahzab – 33:45–46)

In this verse of the Qur'an the messenger has been called as a lamp spreading light, and at other place Book has been called as the guide. The Qur'an says, "Verily this Qur'an does guide to that which is most right" (Al-Israa – 17:9).

This discussion shows that the Book cannot be separated from the messenger. A human being needs both for his own guidance. Man needs a system for thinking and practicing, and also has an urge to establish a civilization and a culture with the right foundation; to keep them in the right direction, it is necessary for him to get guidance from the Book and messengership, and always to remain in contact with them. Keeping in view this intense need of the Book and the messengership have been given an independent position each, as two separate but integral parts of the whole composition of Islamic beliefs. And it has been admonished repeatedly that to believe in each of them is indispensable.

Belief in All Books of God

Islam commands to believe in all those books, which have been revealed by God to His messengers. As it is necessary to

believe in all messengers, to believe in all the books sent down by God also is essential to be a Muslim. As the Qur'an says:

> And who believe in the revelation sent to you, and sent before your time. (Al-Baqarah – 2:4)
>
> The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from the Lord, as do the men of faith, each one (of them) believes in Allah, His angels, His Books, and His messengers. "We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His messengers." (Al-Baqarah – 2:285)
>
> It is He Who sent down to you (step by step) in truth, the book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Torah (of Moses), and the Gospel (of Jesus). (Al-i-Imran – 3:3)
>
> Say: We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and Tribes, and in (the books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord; we make no distinction between one another among them, and to Allah do we bow our will (in Islam). (Al-i-Imran – 3:84)
>
> Those who reject the book and the (revelations) with which We sent Our messengers; but soon shall they know, when the yokes (shall be) round their necks, and the chains; they shall be dragged along in the boiling fetid fluid then in the Fire shall they be burned. (Al-Mumin or Gafir – 40:71–72)
>
> We sent aforetime with clear signs and sent down with them the book and the balance (of right and wrong) that men may stand forth in justice. (Al-Hadid – 57:25)

After this brief statement, the Qur'an mentions the names of some of the books, and commands us to believe in them, and praises them by giving them appreciative titles as the Taurat (The Old Testament), which has been called by the titles of guidance, light, criterion, splendor, guide, and mercy. (See Al-Qasas, section 5; Al-Maidah, section 6; Al-Anbiyaa, section 4; Al-Ahqaf, section 2.)

The Gospel also has been termed as guidance, light, and admonition (see in section 4 of chapter Al-Maidah). This is one

of the principles of the Qur'an, the books mentioned in detail should be believed and studied in detail, and the books mentioned briefly should be studied briefly.

According to the Islamic belief, the books have been sent with their messengers to all nations of the world. All of them issued from one source, as the rays issue from one sun. All of them came with the same truth, light, and guidance that is called "Islam" because of that anyone who is a Muslim believes in all of them, and anyone who rejects any one of these books rejects all. In fact, he is one of the offenders who deny their source.

Only the Qur'an to Be Followed

However, after belief, where the frontier of following and obedience begins, it is necessary to cut off the connection with other books, and follow only the Qur'an. There are a number of reasons for doing so.

First, Holy Books: many of them do not exist now, and of those that exist, no one of them except the Qur'an is preserved and intact in their original words and in meanings. They became an assortment of words of God and words of men. Falsehood has been mingled with truth and guidance in these books in such a way that it has become impossible to separate them from each other.

The same thing can be said about those books which are uncritically assumed to be inspired books, so some religions are based on them. Some of them do not even admit the concept of receiving books from God. About some of them, we do not know if God had sent them, and who was their recipient messenger, or what was his period. The languages of some of them are dead languages, and it is very difficult to understand them. Some of them have been corrupted with profane desires, imaginations, and fictitious stories. Some others enjoin worship of deities other than One God; likewise other false beliefs and practices found an honoured place in them. Such books cannot guide people to the right path. By following such books, man cannot keep himself from going astray

The second thing is that the available books, except the Qur'an, whether they are inspired or not, are tilted toward some particular race or influenced by the needs of a particular period. These books never have been the means of guidance for humanity as a whole in their own times, nor are they able to guide humanity in the present time.

The third thing is that, admittedly in the teachings of these books, one may find some good principles and laws that are effective in reforming people's dealings and conduct, and it is also true that all of these books have some elements of truth in them, but none of them encompasses all the good things, exhibits the total truth, and guides man in all departments of his life.

The last book of God, the Qur'an, is free from the above-mentioned three shortcomings.

1. The Qur'an is secure and intact in the same words in which it was presented by Muhammad (peace be upon him). Since the first day, people in their hundreds and thousands, in all periods of time, have continued to memorize the Qur'an word by word. And billions of people recite it every day. Writing, calligraphy, and printing of the Qur'an has always been in practice in all periods of time, and never has any discrepancy in its contents been found. There is no room for any doubt in the fact that the same Qur'an exists now that was delivered by Muhammad (peace be upon him), and it will exist forever. Not a single word of its text has ever been corrupted it, and it will never be possible.
2. The Qur'an has been revealed in the Arabic language, that is a living language, spoken and understood by millions of people all over the world. The eloquent and up to the standard literature of this language is the same as it was at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an. People do not face the difficulties in understanding its meanings that they face in understanding the books in the dead languages.

3. The third is that the Qur'an is a total truth, and from beginning to end, full of Godly teachings, you will not find in it an atom of profanity, voluptuous indulgence, national or racial narrow-mindedness, or ignorant aberrations of thought, feeling and conduct.
4. The Qur'an addresses all the humanity, and it presents beliefs, principles of ethics, and laws of practice that are not for a particular race, place, or time. All the teachings of the Qur'an are universal and eternal.
5. It encompasses all those truths, words of knowledge, and good things that have been mentioned in previous books. In the presence of such a comprehensive book, naturally, man becomes independent of other books.
6. The Holy Qur'an is the latest version of God's instructions and teachings; some of the directions given in the earlier books, because of the special circumstances, have been abolished, and various new teachings have been added in the Qur'an. So anyone who is not the mindless prisoner of his ancestor's mistaken ideologies is in fact the follower of God's guidance, and should follow the latest holy book not the old ones.
7. These are the reasons: because of them Islam has to cut off the following and obedience of all other books, and has declared that the Qur'an is the only book to be followed. Therefore, Islam is calling the whole world to adopt the Qur'an as their supreme law. God has declared in the Qur'an:

> We have sent down to you the book in truth, that you might judge between people by that which Allah has shown you; so be not an advocate for those who betray their trust. (An-Nisaa – 4:105)

> So it is those who believe in him, honour him, help him, and follow the light which is sent down with him, it is they who will prosper. (Al-A'raf – 7:157)

That is why those nations who already have God's Book with them also have been called to believe in and follow the Qur'an. And the Qur'an gives command again and again.

> O you people of the Book, believe in what We have (now) revealed, confirming what was already with you. (An-Nisaa – 4:47)

> O People of the Book, there has come to you our messenger, revealing to you much that you used to hide in the book and passing over much (that is now unnecessary): there has come to you from Allah a new light and a perspicuous Book. Wherewith Allah guides who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety and leads them out of darkness, by His Will, unto the light guides them to a path that is straight. (Al-Maidah – 5:15–16)

> We have sent down to you Manifest signs (Ayat); and none reject them but those who are perverse. (Al-Baqarah – 2:99)

Belief in Detail Regarding the Qur'an

The Qur'an is the guide for man's thoughts and beliefs, and also the law for his practical life, and it is necessary to obey and follow it. But this adherence cannot become perfect until man has the firm belief that the Qur'an is the truth and free of all kind of mistakes. If any kind of doubt about perfection of the Qur'an finds its way into his heart then he will lose his trust in the Book, and he will not be able to follow it satisfactorily.

Because of this necessity, the Qur'an has mentioned all the integral parts of belief in the Book. The Qur'an claims that it has been kept safe by God in the same words in which it was revealed. Nothing has been added to it or deleted from it. The following verses of the Qur'an are the strong evidence to it.

> It is for Us to collect it and to recite it: But when We have recited it, follow you its recital (as promulgated). (Al-Qiyamat – 75:17–18)

> We shall make you read (O Muhammad) so that you shall not forget. (Al-A'la – 87:6)

> We have, without doubt, sent down the message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption). (Al-Hajr – 15:9)

> And recite (and teach) what has been revealed to you of the book of your Lord, none can change His words and none will you find as a refuge other than Him. (Al-Kahf – 18:27)

Secondly, satan has not the minutest role in the revelation of the Qur'an. The Qur'an says, "The satan did not bring it down: it is not meet for them, nor it is in their power. Indeed they are banished from hearing it" (Ash-Shu'araa – 26:210–212).

Thirdly, there is no role even of the messenger's volition in the revealing process. The Qur'an says, "Nor does he say (anything) of (his own desire). It is no less than Inspiration sent down to him" (An-Najm – 53:3–4).

Fourthly, untruth has absolutely no room in the Qur'an. "And indeed it is a Book of exalted power. No falsehood can approach it: from before or behind it: it is sent down by One full of wisdom, Worthy of all Praise" (Fussilat or Hama Al-Sajdah – 41:41–42).

Fifthly, the Qur'an represents the total Truth: it has been revealed on the basis of knowledge, not conjecture; in it there is nothing crooked: and it shows exactly the right path.

> Those who have been given knowledge see that what is revealed unto you from your Lord is the truth and leads unto the path of the Mighty, the Owner of Praise. (Saba – 34:6)
>
> But verily it is Truth of assured certainty. (Al-Haqqa – 69:51)
>
> For We had certainly sent unto them a Book, based on knowledge, which We explained in detail, a guide and a mercy to all who believe. (Al-A'raf – 7:52)
>
> Say: The (Qur'an) was sent down by Him Who knows the secret (that is) in the heavens and the earth: verily He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Al-Furqan – 25:6)
>
> This the Book of Allah, there is no doubt in it; it is a guidance for the pious. (Al-Baqarah – 2:2)
>
> Praise be to Allah, Who has sent to His servant the Book and has allowed therein no crookedness (He has made it) straight. (Al-Kahf – 18:1)
>
> Verily this Qur'an does guide to that which is most right (or stable) and gives the glad tidings to the believers who work deeds of righteousness, that they shall have a magnificent reward. (Al-Israa – 17:9)

Sixthly, even a prophet does not have the right to make any change in the teachings and commands of the Qur'an. The Qur'an says:

> Those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us, say: "Bring us a Qur'an other than this, or change this." Say: 'It is not for me, of my own accord, to change it: I follow nothing but what is revealed unto me: if I were to disobey my Lord, I should myself fear the chastisement of a Great Day (to come).' (Yunus – 10:15)

Seventhly, whatever is repugnant to the Qur'an is never to be followed. "Follow (O men) the revelation given unto you from your Lord, and follow not, as friends or protectors, other than Him. Little it is you remembers of admonition" (Al-A'raf – 7:3).

The detailed belief about the Qur'an has been mentioned in the verses quoted above. To believe in its each part is necessary. The person who misses any part of it will not be able to follow the Qur'an perfectly and will go astray from the right path that is called "Islam."

The Cornerstone of Islamic Society

What are the factors that make Islam an independent civilization? What are the fundamental things which make Muslims one nation despite the differences between them of race, language, colour, and country. The following fundamental factors make them united under the light of Islamic civilization. The main factor is their belief in the Book and in the Messenger, and accepting the guidance of the Qur'an and the Messenger. The way of thinking, beliefs, ways of worship, the example of conduct and dealings, and all civil laws are drawn from the one source, the Book and the Prophet (peace be upon him). In this way, all believers become part of one nation and one independent civilization.

No doubt, differences may occur in interpretation of verses of the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet under changing situations, because people may differ in their knowledge, wisdom, research, opinion, and inclination. These kinds of differences are natural,

but they are not fundamental; they are about parts of the whole thing, or about branches, not about the roots.

It is a fact that differences of opinion especially in jurisprudence (science of Islamic law) resulted in creating different schools of thought, but these differences do not form separate nations. The fundamental thing on which Muslims become a nation is the belief that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is messenger of God and the only leader to be followed, and the Qur'an is the Book of God and the source of guidance. Muslims have to derive all laws and principles for their individual and collective life from these two sources: the Qur'an and the Sunnah (sayings and practices of the messenger). All those people who believe in this fundamental thought are one nation, and all of those who do not believe in it are different nations.

The Qur'an encompasses all the beliefs of Islam. Any person who believes in the Qur'an in fact believes in God, in angels, in His messengers, in His Books, and in the Day of Judgment, because all of these beliefs are given in the Qur'an in detail. Besides this, all the basic principles and laws have been recorded in the Qur'an. Actually, the Qur'an is the source of all Islamic Laws (*Shariah*) that have been explained by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through his own words and actions. So anyone who believes in the Book and the Messenger and obeys them and follows them in all the departments of his life is a true Muslim. This is the belief, and its active pursuit is called "Islam." These two things are integral parts of Islam. Wherever these two things are present, Islam is there, and wherever these two things are not present together, Islam is missing from there.

Belief in Life After Death

'Hereafter' means life after death. Rarely, a page of the Qur'an may be found without mentioning the life after death. It has been tried in different ways to instil this belief in man's mind. Very strong arguments have been advanced to prove the truth of this belief. Its details have been related. Its importance has been emphasized. The call has been made to believe in it. It has clearly been declared that the deeds of anyone who does not believe in the life after death will go to waste. The Qur'an says,

> Those who reject our signs and the meeting in the Hereafter, vain are their deeds; can they expect to be rewarded except as they have wrought? (Al-A'raf – 7:147)

> Lost indeed are they who treat it as a falsehood that they must meet Allah. (Al-An'am – 6:31)

The beleif in the Hereafter is the answer to those questions which naturally cross man's mind.

A Few Natural Questions

It is in man's nature that he feels sadness more than happiness and agony more than comfort. The more a thing affects his feelings, the more his thinking power is moved. When we achieve something, we become overjoyed, and we don't bother to think about where it came from, how it came to us, or how long it will remain with us. On the contrary, when we lose something, the shock makes our thinking power more active and immediately we begin to think how we lost it, where it has gone, where it can be now, whether we will be able to have it again. Therefore life and its commencement do not have so much importance to us as death and our final destiny has. Although when we find ourselves at the centre of the panorama of world, the question naturally arises in our mind, what is all of this tumult, how did it begin, who caused it?

However, for all these questions, one needs time to ponder; common people don't like to entangle themselves in these questions except for a few thinkers. On the contrary, everybody has to taste death with its bitterness. Everybody has occasions in his lifetime of seeing his near and dear ones dying before his eyes. Death is the common lot of men. People die, whether they are helpless and weak, or strong and formidable. There are deaths full of sorrow, and deaths that warn people. Everybody believes that one day he himself will have to go in this way. There would be no one in the world who may not have the chance to think over a few vital questions, what is death, where does man go when passing through the door of death, what is behind the curtain of death, is there something behind the door or is it a total void?

These are the common questions, pondered over by common and distinguished people alike, but there are some other questions, which stab at the heart of all thinkers and when tragedies occur this stabbing becomes acute.

It is a fact that life means action, even a short lull in our activities itself is a kind of action. Another thing is that each of our actions has a reaction. We have to taste the fruits of both good deeds and bad deeds. Usually wicked people get punishment in this world, sometimes they hurt themselves by their own bad deeds by falling into troubles like fatal disease, injury and severe losses, even death, but there are still some of their wicked deeds that they did not face the consequences. Those innocent people who became victims of the tyrant's mischief and oppression, how can they be compensated for their losses?

The same thing can be said about righteous people. They did so many good things in this world and they suffered a lot for that but they did not get the full reward for their righteous deeds and sacrifices they have even been afflicted with unbearable hardships: they have been jailed and some of them have been sent to the gallows. The question is whether their good deeds and sacrifices, all go in vain or will they be rewarded? If they are rewarded, when and where? No doubt

they have enjoyed satisfaction in their hearts, but the question remains if this satisfaction is the only reward for their lifelong struggle in the way of righteousness.

This question relates to individuals, but there is another question about the whole world and whatever is in it. We all have observed the perpetual cycle of birth and death, construction and destruction in all the creatures of the universe. The question is, when will this course end. Is this world an eternal world or does it have an age limit? Will any change come to the universe and its system?

Islam has given the answer of all these questions. Belief in the Hereafter is the solution to all these problems. But before discussing the truth and moral and cultural effects of this belief, we would like to see how far man has succeeded in his quest to solve these problems.

Denial of the Hereafter

One group of thinkers says that whatever life is, it is the life of this world, and death means total extinction; after death there is no life; no senses, no feelings, no reward, and no consequences. The Qur'an has mentioned their opinion in the following words:

> As to those (Quraish), they say forsooth: 'there is nothing beyond our first death, and we shall not be raised again.' (Ad-Dukhan – 44:34–35)

> And they say: 'what is there but our life in this world? We shall die and we live, and nothing but Time can destroy us.' But of that they have no knowledge: they merely conjecture. (Al-Jathiah – 45:24)

Whatever they say is not based on knowledge or on the research that brought them to the conclusion that there is nothing after death. Actually their opinion is based on their dependence on their senses; as they did not feel anything after death through their senses, they deny it. The question is whether it is enough for the denial of anything's existence, that we don't feel it with our senses. If the answer is in the affirmative, then I can claim that when I feel something's

presence with my senses, exactly at the same time, it comes into existence, and in fact, when it disappears from my senses it becomes extinct at the very same moment. For example, the river came into existence at the very moment I saw it flowing and when it disappeared from my sight, in fact it became extinct. Would anyone who has any amounts of reason accept this claim of mine? If the answer is the negative, how can their claim be accepted since they have not observed with their eyes what is behind death, therefore nothing is present beyond death?

As it is wrong to say something about death and extinction based on the senses, it is also wrong concerning life and existence, for example when someone says that the universe is eternal because he has not seen its destruction. If this logic is acceptable then I should be allowed to say about a formidable building that it will stand in its place forever because I have never seen it falling, and I have never found any weakness in its structure. Would people of reason accept my contention?

The Effect of Denial of the Hereafter on Morals

Philosophers and scholars almost agreed that the day will come when the structure of the whole universe will fall apart. Now there is no one who is in favour of the old theory of philosophers that the universe is eternal but many of them say that there is no life after death. Their opinion is based on the same unreasonable argument discussed above.

Laying aside the unreasonableness of this opinion, it is a fact that the denial of the Hereafter never satisfies man, and is not able to give a satisfactory answer to the questions that arise in his heart by observing different situations in day-to-day life. If man's role and morals are built on denial of the Hereafter, he will be in one of the two situations. If the things are not in his favour then this belief will produce in him a severe type of desperation and nervousness, when he sees that the righteousness does not bear any fruit in this world, his enterprising nature will become dull and inert. When he sees that there is no way to get justice against the oppressor, he will

be heartbroken. When he sees that mischievous, wicked people and oppressors are flourishing, naturally he will think that the world favours the dominance of evil, and for righteousness there is nothing but subjugation. On the contrary, if things go in his favour, the effect of this belief will be the worst; he will become an animal of lust. Naturally he will think that whatever time he has, it is good fortune, and that he should use every second of it in enjoying luxuries. If he has missed any chance of pleasure and delight, this will be a great loss for him, because there is no other life to compensate the loss. Then he will not hesitate to usurp the rights of others, or to commit heinous crimes just to fulfil his desires. If he performs any good deed, the only motive behind it will be material gain, fame, or honour. To him, sin or crime is the action that brings some kind of corporal punishment, physical injury, and financial loss. Good deeds that do not bring any reward to him in this world would appear mere follies, and the bad deeds that bring no material loss in this world be preferable.

If any society builds its completely moral system on this belief then it will be built on selfishness and sensual desires. Righteousness will consist in material gain and evil will be tantamount to worldly loss. A lie would be sin if it results in some material loss, it will be a good deed if it brought some material gain. If truthfulness becomes the means of some worldly gain then it will be a virtue, otherwise it will be the worst evil. Fornication or adultery will be desirable if it gives pleasure; it will be not good if it is harmful in any way to health.

The denial of the Hereafter develops a different way of thinking and a criterion for weighing deeds. If man does not have hope of a reward for his good deeds or fear of ill consequences of his bad deeds in the Hereafter, then naturally, he will consider only results of his deeds that appear in this world. This way of thinking will bring a change in moral values, which will not be healthy for any civilized human society. It would be more appropriate to say that with such

moral values no human society can save itself from falling to a lower level than animals.

Some people say that as far as reward and consequences are concerned, man gets material gains as well as losses for deeds in his worldly life. Moreover, they say, the reproach and satisfaction of his conscience is enough for any punishment and reward. But I say: there are many sins and crimes, for which people are ready to endure the pricks and rebukes of their conscience for the sake of pleasure and gains that they get. Moreover satisfaction of conscience cannot be enough reward for the hardships and sacrifices done in the matter of a just cause. The other point is: if you think over the nature of human conscience, you will come to know that the conscience does not give you thoughts and beliefs, instead, whatever thoughts and beliefs have been planted in your heart and mind through education and training, your conscience supports and works in their favour. For example, the conscience of a believer (Muslim) does not reproach him for those things, which bother the conscience of a polytheist. Through this discussion, we arrive at the conclusion that if the moral thoughts and values of deeds of a society are changed, their conscience also will change its direction. Neither it will rebuke on those deeds, which are no more sins to the society, nor it will feel satisfaction for those deeds, which are no more desirable in its society.

Transmigration (The passing of a soul into another body after death)

Another group of thinkers has presented the philosophy of "transmigration" (*tanasukh*). The essence of this philosophy is that death does not mean total extinction, it means just changing the body. Soul after departing from a body enters into another body but this figure is given to him according to his qualities, good or bad, that he nurtured in his previous life. If by committing sins and crimes he has nurtured bad qualities then his soul will pass into the shapes of lower grade like animals or plants. On the contrary if he has nurtured good qualities by doing virtuous deeds then his soul will ascend to

higher stations. In a nutshell, according to this philosophy, whatever punishment and reward man deserves, he will get them in this world. Souls will continue coming repeatedly into the world by transmigration; in this way they will face the consequences of their deeds done in their former lives.

Once upon a time this philosophy had been very popular. Centuries before Christ (peace be upon him) in Greece, the celebrated Greek philosopher Pythagoras and some others were among the believers of transmigration. It was talk of the day in Rome before Christianity. Some of its remains are found in the ancient history of Egypt. Under the foreign influence Jews also allowed it to make its way into their folds, but now it is found in Indian religions such as Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Jainism, or in western and southern Africa, Madagascar, Middle Australia, Indonesia, Oceania, and primitive or semicivilized tribes of South and North America. Otherwise, all civilized nations have rejected it, because the advancement in knowledge and reason has refuted all those philosophies on which the belief in transmigration is based.

When we study the history of this philosophy, we come to know that in ancient India, which is called the period of the Vedas (religious books of Hindus), no sign of this philosophy is traced. The belief of Aryan nations of that period was that man is provided another life after death: with total comfort for the righteous and total suffering for the wicked. After that we find a sudden change in their thoughts, and in the next period of the history we see books in the Indian literature in which we find the thought of transmigration (*tanasukh*) as a philosophic belief, the reason for this change has not been ascertained yet. Some researchers say that the Aryans borrowed this thought from the Dravidians (indigenous people of India). Others say that this thought was popular among the lower ranks of Aryans, Brahmin philosophers took it from them and mixed it with their conjectures, thus they built an edifice of beliefs. Likewise, the religion of Buddha in its early days was void of a detailed scheme of the philosophy of transmigration, which was infused in the later Buddhist literature. As far as its earliest literature is

concerned, the Buddhist belief was that life is like a great river that flows constantly upland and downland. Later on, this thought developed and took another shape claiming that the whole universe is one divine being who is constantly changing its appearance. Through this study, it appears that whatever knowledge had been given to the Indian nations through inspiration, they altered it and invented a new philosophical religion.

Critical Reasoning

Here we will not discuss the transmigration in detail; but just to show its falsity, a brief critical review seems necessary. The thoughts on which the philosophy of transmigration is based are clearly against reason, and against all the knowledge man has acquired after pondering over life and the universe.

According to this belief, man will face the consequences of his deeds in this world through transmigration; if he has performed good deeds he will ascend to higher realms, and in case of bad deeds, he will descend to lower stations. For example, if man has committed sins in this life his soul will descend to the lower world of animals and vegetation, if an animals had been good in its life, then it world ascend to human status. In other words, animal life is the result of bad deeds done during human life, and human life is the result of good deeds done, during the period of animal life. It means that those people who are now living in human body are human because they had performed good deeds in their animal life and plants and animals are in this lower world because they had committed sins when they were human. In order to accept this philosophy, we have to accept some other things which are against reason and knowledge.

1. The circle of the Transmigration is such that no beginning point can be ascribed for it. To be a human, it is necessary to be an animal or something botanic, and to be an animal it is necessary to be a human being. It is a circular course that has no beginning point nor ending; for our reason it is absolutely impossible.

2. If the circle of transmigration is eternal and perpetual then we have to accept that the souls and the material, which provides a new figure to souls, at each in their turn, are eternal and perpetual. We also have to accept that our solar system and the powers which are working in this system are eternal, but reason and scientific research both say that our solar system is neither eternal nor perpetual.
3. Then it must be accepted that whatever characteristics of distinction are attributed to human being, animals, and botanical things, in fact have to be attributed to their bodies, not to their souls. Because the soul, which lives in a man's body, has the power of thinking and reasoning, but when it transmigrates into an animal figure, it is void of reason. If it transmigrates into a botanic figure, it will become deprived of the power of will and action.
4. Deeds that have been performed willfully, and with understanding can be categorized as virtuous or evil. By this criterion, man's action can be virtuous or evil, and he can be liable for reward or punishment. But the actions of animals and botanical things cannot be categorized as good or evil and it is also not justified to apply to them the law of consequences, otherwise we have to accept that animals and botanic things also have the power of will, choice, and action.
5. If our next life is the result of our evil deeds, it is obvious that the fruits grown out of evil seeds will be evil; when we will get the evil fruits in our next life, how can we expect that from evil fruits anything good will come? Evil fruits will produce more evil fruits and in our third life the evil fruits will become more evil. In this way the soul of a sinner after entering the circle of transmigration will continue to fall down to the lowest stations, it means that the sinners might not have any chance of ever ascending. In other words it is possible for a man to become an animal in his next life, but it is

impossible for him to become a man from an animal. Now a question arises, people who are human beings at present, whose good deeds made them able to have the human figure, where did they come from?

The Effects of This Belief on Culture

Besides this, there are many reasons for a person who has sound reason to reject the belief of transmigration. As a human being advances in reason and knowledge, the falsehood of transmigration becomes clear. Now it is found only among those people who have not progressed in knowledge and reason. Along with this, it is also a fact that the belief in transmigration blunts the courage and kills the spirit of progress. From this very philosophy stems another belief that is known among the Hindu religions as "Ahimsa" (according to this belief, killing any living thing is a sin). This belief is quite fatal for individual as well as national life. Any nation that adopts this belief will find that its spirit of doing battle almost dies. Its physical powers become weak. It becomes deprived of those best foods that nourish all the organs of the human body. Its individuals become weak physically as well as mentally. Consequently, because of their mental weakness their nation becomes liable to defeat and subjugation, and at last it disappears from the earth or becomes assimilated to other more powerful nations.

Another harm caused by the belief in transmigration is that it cuts the roots of civilization and culture; it leads man to abandon the world and to the monastic life. The believers in transmigration believe that it is desire that pollutes the soul of a human being, and because of desire; the soul has to enter into different figures repeatedly and face the consequences of its deeds. The only way to come out of the circle of transmigration (*Awagaman*) is to kill desire and save oneself from entanglement in worldly affairs, because after involvement with worldly life it is impossible for a man to keep himself aloof from desire and its consequences. The logical result of this belief is that those who want salvation should make their

abode in forests and mountains, and those who have no courage to do this must be prepared to descend to the lower stations of animals and botanic things. Would this thought be helpful in any way for the progress of civilization and culture? Would it be possible for any nation of the world to advance on the road of progress with this belief?

No doubt, the belief in transmigration is better than the thought of total extinction; it satisfies man's natural desire for an eternal life to some extent. Along with this belief has come the concept of the consequences of deeds. On this basis, it can become a bulwark for a good moral law. But at first, it is undeniable, which we have pointed out repeatedly that any belief which is against reason and knowledge and a hindrance to the progress of civilization and culture can never attain a strong grip on man's mind and heart and will not be able to maintain effective influence on the minds of people in all phases of their intellectual and cultural progress.

If this belief cannot keep its grip on people's minds, how it can be helpful in giving life and stability to a moral system just by its presence in the pages of books, as a philosophical thought.

No belief can be effective until it is instilled in the hearts of people and they should have full faith in it. The other thing is that the belief in transmigration loses its value because of its final phase, that the circle of transmigration moves like the wheel of a machine and the result of a deed automatically comes out as it is destined and that it cannot be changed through repentance, asking forgiveness, or atonement. It means that after committing a sin man will not be able to come out of the maze of sins and naturally he will think that while in the end, his soul will transmigrate into an animal or plant, why should he not fully enjoy whatever pleasures human life provides to him?

The Belief in the Hereafter

The opinions of two schools of thought of religions (the first total extinct of human life, the second, transmigration)

have already been discussed. It has been proved that both opinions are against reason. Also they are unable to give a satisfactory answer to questions that naturally arise in man's mind after seeing the signs of destruction and death in the world. In addition, they are not able to become a bulwark to a righteous moral system. Now let us listen to what the third religion says about worldly life and man's fate:

1. Everything in this universe has its span of existence, and when it comes to its end, all of its components fall apart. In the same way, this whole universe has its life span, and after completing its time, it also will break into pieces; a new universe with a new system and different laws of nature will come into being.
2. After complete destruction of this universe, God the Creator, and Lord of the Worlds, will establish His Court of Justice for taking account of everything. On that Day of Judgment man will receive a new physical life. He will stand before his Lord: all his deeds done in worldly life will be judged and weighed: his case will be decided with full justice. For his good deeds he will receive reward and for his evil deeds he will receive punishment.
3. The worldly life, in fact, is a prelude to man's next life. The worldly life is of temporary nature while the life in Hereafter is eternal. This one is incomplete and that one is perfect. The full results of man's deeds cannot appear in the short span of this temporary life. Every seed which is sowed in this soil cannot bear fruits during the short worldly life. Whatever has been left fruitless in this world will appear in that world with real results and real fruits. So the criterion for judging the values of deeds should not be the incomplete and often deceiving results of this world but will appear as final results in the hereafter.

This religion has been presented by the Messengers of God. The Holy Book the Qur'an calls us toward the same religion with great enthusiasm. But before discussing the moral effects

of this religion and its place and position in Islamic civilization, we must see what arguments it presents in its support and how far our reason accepts them.

The Right Way of Scientific Research

The question is if any life after death belongs to those subjects which are beyond the reach of our senses and sensual experience. What we feel is that a person who was breathing and moving a few seconds before has lost all signs of life. That which was providing the power of movement and life to his body suddenly left the body and disappeared. The question is, where has that thing gone? Is it still alive somewhere or is it nonexistent? Will it come back to the same body or to any other body of the same kind? As far as our experiential knowledge is concerned, we cannot give the answer to these questions affirmatively or negatively because we have neither felt this thing before nor are we feeling it now. At the very beginning, we must understand that these questions have nothing to do with science. If science cannot say *yes* to these questions it also has no right to answer these questions negatively. All science can say is "I do not know what is there after death." By not accepting its total ignorance, it may say, "As I don't know what happens after death, I say that nothing happens after death" then, this kind of demonstration by science cannot be called reasonable and acceptable.

In addition to knowledge gained by the senses we have other means of knowledge that is called "contemplation or deliberation." Human nature always demands to go beyond objects of sense and with the help of contemplation to find out the hidden realities. This thought quest is called "contemplation or deliberation."

There Are Two Ways of Contemplation

One way is to close your eyes to all signs and evidence that are present within yourself and in the world outside of you, and begin deriving conclusions through pure logical hypothesis and continue exercising your intellect until you reach a conclusion.

These are the fields of pure conjectural philosophy, and from the darkest phase of your quest from this very point originate all the philosophical schools of thought or religions. After the entrance into this maze, man goes astray into the valleys of imaginative beliefs and thoughts; from this very source stem all those conflicting thoughts and beliefs which give contradictory concepts about God, angels, the universe, and life after death; they all are the result of groping in darkness and conjecturing.

The other way of contemplation is to open your eyes and observe those signs and phenomena which are present in yourself and in the universe around you, those signs are like shining lamps. Take these lamps and with the help of straight contemplation, try to reach the truth, which is hidden beneath those signs. Both science and philosophy can function together on this way of contemplation. Although this way of contemplation is not the surest way for reaching the truth, this is the only way (irrespective of the guidance of messengers) for man to reach the truth or near the truth. But he needs some skills like sharp observation, delicate reception of mind, and strong contemplation. In the field of theoretical science, human advancement depends on observation and contemplation. Without believing in the theories and principles on which modern science is founded, no student of science can advance even a foot ahead; none of them have the base of pure experiment and observation. The foundation of each theory and principle is based on intellectual supposition or opinion, while experiment and observations are used as material for proving an opinion. The law of nature and gravity of cause and effect, the principle of relativity, the law of evolution, natural selection, likewise other principles and laws, in which many great scientists believe, are all the result of the observation of phenomena, effects, signs, as well as contemplation and intellectual opinion. Otherwise, no one has observed these laws and principles, and never with his senses directly.

Here is an important aspect that should be understood very well.

Whatever opinion a scientist forms after a long process of observation and contemplation, his belief in his opinion will be as strong as the ordinary man's belief that is achieved through his observation of a thing by his senses directly. Despite this, no scientist, however great he may be, can press anybody to accept his opinion. An ordinary man cannot have the same opinion the scientist has until he has the same skill of observation and contemplation which the scientist has.

There is only one way for the ordinary man to advance in the field of science, and it is to believe firmly in the observation and opinion of the scientist in whose skill and insight the man puts trust.

Understand this precept very well, because for understanding the statements of the Qur'an and its arguments, it is necessary to understand it fully. Many misunderstandings are the result of not grasping this precept thoroughly.

Now, we should see what the Holy Book Qur'an says about the life after death.

The Objection of Disbelievers About the Hereafter

The disbelievers of modern times raise the same objection that was raised by disbelievers during the revelation of the Qur'an. Their objection has no weight, but it is a likely objection that can be raised; the Qur'an has mentioned it and rejected it with strong arguments. The disbelievers of today and of the days past have consensus that life after death is not understandable and acceptable to reason. Their contention is that when the dead bodies have decayed and decomposed and even scattered all over the earth and dispersed by the wind how can they be reassembled and joined with their souls again? It is quite impossible. The Qur'an has mentioned their objection in the following verses:

> And they say: "what! When we lie, hidden and lost, in the earth shall we indeed be in a creation renewed?" No, they deny the meeting with their Lord. (As-Sajda – 32:10)

> They say: "What! When we are reduced to bones and dust, should we really be raised up (to be) a new creation?" (Al-Israa – 17:49)

> So the unbelievers say: 'This is a wonderful thing! What! When we die and become dust (shall we live again?). That is a (sort of) return far (from our understanding).' (Qaf – 50:2–3)

> And he makes comparisons for Us, and forgets his own (origin and) creation: he says, 'who can give life to dry bones and decomposed ones (at that)?' (Ya-Sin – 36:78)

The Qur'an's Way of Reasoning

For removing this doubt, the Qur'an has its own way of reasoning. At first, the Qur'an calls the people to observe signs of the power of God and contemplate over them. The Qur'an says,

> Soon We will show them Our signs in the (furthest) regions (of the earth), and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that it is the Truth. Is it not enough that your Lord does witness all things? (Fussilat – 41:53)

> Do they see nothing in the kingdom of the heavens and the earth...? (Al-A'raf – 7:185)

> And how many signs in the heavens and the earth do they pass by? Yet they turn (their faces) away from them. (Yusuf – 12:105)

These verses indicate that man has not been given such a power that whatever is kept hidden from him can be seen with his own eyes or that he can get knowledge of it through experiment. Of course, if he observes the signs which appear before him day and night in the structure of the heavens and the earth, also in himself, and tries to reach the truth through contemplation, then he will be able to know that whatever has been said by messengers and the Books is truth.

The Possibility of the Next Life

Then the Qur'an mentions those signs which are most prominent to man's eyes, and on the basis of those signs it contends that the things that are out of reach of his imagination and understanding, he can think and talk about, can hardly be imagined, but it is not impossible. The Qur'an says,

> Allah is He Who has raised the heavens without any pillars that you can see; then He established Himself on the throne. He has subjected the sun and the moon (to the law)! Each one runs (its course) for a term appointed. He doth regulate all affairs, explaining the signs in detail that you may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord. (Ar-Ra'd – 13:2)

> What! Are you the more difficult to create or the heaven (above) (Allah) has constructed it. (An-Nazi'at – 79:27)

In these verses, God has mentioned the planets and the structure of the universe. He argues that the Creator has constructed such a huge universe, fixed such tremendous planets into a great system. His might is constantly keeping these great planets on a prescribed course of movement so that they cannot stray from their appointed path and time by a hair's breadth, or the span of a second. His power has established the various parts of the universe with unseen supports, which are out of the reach of your senses and intellect. To think that such a powerful God cannot raise you after death is that not a vain thinking. The Qur'an says, "See they not Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, has power to create the like of them (anew)" (Al-Israa – 17:99).

After the heavens, the Qur'an draws our attention to the nearest environment, the signs of the earth. It says,

> Say: 'Travel through the earth and see how Allah did originate creation; so will Allah produce a later creation; for Allah has power over all things.' (Al-Ankabut – 29:20)

> A sign for them is the earth that is dead: We do give it life, and produce grain therefrom, of which you do eat. (Ya-Sin 36:33)

Then behold (O man!) the Token of Allah's Mercy! How He gives life to the earth after its death: verily the same will give life to the men who are dead: for He has power over all things. (Ar-Rum – 30:50)

Among His signs is this: you see the earth humble; but when we send down rain to it, it is stirred to life and yields increase. Truly, He who gives life to the (dead) earth can surely give life to (men) who are dead. For He has power over all things. (Ha Mim Sajdah or Fussilat – 41:39)

It is Allah Who sends forth the winds, so that they raise up the clouds, and We drive them to a land that is dead, and revive the earth therewith after its death: even so (will be) the resurrection! (Fatir – 35:9)

After that God says you should shut out everything from your view, and contemplate upon your own self for a little while; there you will see the evidence of God's power over raising the dead to life. The Qur'an says,

Has there not been over man a long period of time, when he was nothing (not even) mentioned? (Al-Insan – 76:1)

How can you reject the faith in Allah? Seeing that you were without life, and He gave you life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will you return. (Al-Baqarah – 2:28)

O mankind! If you have a doubt about the resurrection, (consider) that We created you out of dust: (Al-Hajj – 22:5)

And he makes comparison for Us, and forgets his own (origin and creation): He says: 'Who can give life to (dry) bones and decomposed ones (at that)?' Say: 'He will give them life Who created them for the first time! For He fully knows all creation.' (Ya-Sin – 36:78–79)

Say: '(and even) be you stone or iron, or any created matter which, in your minds, is hardest (to be raised up) (yet shall you be raised up)!' Then will they say: 'Who will cause us to return?' Say: 'He Who created you first!' Then will they wag their heads towards you, and say, 'when will that be?' Say, 'maybe it will be quite soon!' (Al-Israa – 17:50–51)

> Verily We did create man from a product of wet earth then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; then We fashioned the drop a clot, then We fashioned the clot a little lump, then We fashioned the little lump bones, then clothed the bones with flesh, and then produced it as another creation. So blessed be Allah, the best of creators! Then lo! After that you surely die. Then lo! On the day of resurrection you are raised (again).' (Al-Muminun – 23:12–16)

> Was he not a drop of sperm emitted (in lowly form)? Then did he become a leech-like clot; then did (Allah) make and fashion (him) in due proportion. And of him He made two sexes, male and female. Has not He (the same), the power to give life to the dead? (Al-Qiyamat – 75:37–40)

After presenting the clear evidences that are nearer to our observation and senses, the Qur'an reasons out with an open argument that relates to common sense. The Qur'an states that to create things from non-existence into existence is more difficult than to bring them into their original form after they are disintegrated. So the power which has not become helpless in accomplishing a more difficult task will not become helpless in accomplishing an easier work. If a person is able to invent a motor car, would it be fair to say about him that he will not be able to reassemble its parts after they have been dismantled. The same example applies to the creation of the universe. When the Creator has created the universe and brought men from non-existence to existence, how can He be unable to raise men alive after their death? The Qur'an says,

> See they not how Allah originates creation, then repeats it: truly that is easy for Allah. (Al-Ankabut – 29:19)

> It is He Who begins the creation, then repeats it, and for Him it is most easy. (Ar-Rum – 30:27)

> Were We then weary with the first creation, that they should be in confused doubt about a new creation? (Qaf – 50:15)

Now, the only doubt that remains to be removed is how the parts of dead bodies can be reassembled and joined with its soul. Some men died by drowning and their bodies were eaten by fishes, and other creatures of water; other men died by burning in fire, their bodies have been transformed into ashes or smoke, and dissolved in air; some men were buried in the earth and their bodies decayed and decomposed in the soil. People wondered how it would be possible to bring back the former original bodies and then join them with their own souls. Some people have tried to remove this doubt by suggesting that the soul can be given to a new body similar to the old one. But the Qur'an says that God has the power to give the soul its own original body. The parts of the original bodies still exist scattered somewhere in the air, water, or soil, in the botanic or animal forms, or in the form of minerals. God's knowledge is so vast that He knows where every part of the dead bodies is, and His power is so perfect that at His command all scattered parts of the bodies will return instantly to be reassembled the form of the original body. As the Qur'an says,

> We already know how much of them the earth takes away; with Us is a record guarding (the full account). (Qaf – 50:4)

> With Him are the keys of the unseen, the treasures that none knows but He. He knows whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. Nor a leaf does fall but with his knowledge: there is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth, nor any thing fresh or dry (green or withered) but is (inscribed) in a record clear (to those who can read). (Al-An'am – 6:59)

The purpose of whatever has been stated up to this point was to disprove the real reason why people deny life after death. The reason for the denial is not that the unbelievers came to know through some experience, evidence, or some source of certain knowledge that there is no life after death. No, the real cause of their denial is that they are unable to comprehend the phenomenon of raising the dead to life. They have never seen such a thing. They know from everyday experience that no one resumes life after death. Therefore, they think that it is

impossible and incomprehensible. However, a little contemplation may change this way of thinking, and the impossible begins to seem possible. Those things that seem possible to us seem so because we are used to them. As a small seed gives birth to a plant, which turns into a huge tree, a drop of sperm in the womb of mother is developed into a baby and comes out into this world. Water is created by the combination of two gases, and turning it into steam then again into water can recycle it. Movement of millions and millions of planets in the heavens is under a strict discipline. People are used to all these things, therefore they seem to them possible. Had they been living in a different environment the same things would seem to them impossible. For example, if we suppose about the planet Mars that its soil does not grow plants and trees. If you say to the people of Mars that a tiny seed, when it is sowed in the soil of the earth, develops into a huge tree which produces the same seeds in thousands. Certainly, this disclosure will appear to be impossible to them. In the same way, the life after death appears impossible to unbelievers. It is obvious that their opinion is not based on knowledge; it is the product of their ignorance. If something is not comprehensible to you, it does not mean that it is impossible. The things which man is inventing today were beyond human understanding a hundred years ago. Similarly, the things which appear today impossible might be invented and made by man a hundred or two hundred years ago, hence, and it could be proved by facts that they were not impossible. Consequently, we cannot call thing impossible merely because it is beyond our understanding.

The first step in proving the existence of an unseen thing is to prove its possibility. The Qur'an, by removing all doubts, has proved its possibility; the next step should be to prove its necessity so it must be accepted by the human mind that such a thing could happen, and its happening is far better than its not occurring.

The System of the Universe Is a Wise System

The proof of the necessity of the next life depends on the question whether the production of the universe is the work of a wise deity or is it the product of chance, which has no wisdom behind it.

The man of the present time, under the influence of modern science, claims that the universe has not been made by any wise deity, it came into being on its own, or by chance, and it is working like an automatic machine with all its parts, including human beings. At the very point in time, when the interaction of matter and energy ends, the whole universe falls apart. It is obvious that to try to find out wisdom and purposefulness behind a system that is run by blind nature, without knowledge, understanding, and power of will, is quite useless. Because of this, materialistic science has excluded teleological causation (interpretation in terms of purpose) from its terms of reference. Then it declared this way of thinking meaningless and absurd; then it claimed with certainty that no purpose is found behind this universe, in any of its works or objects. They say eyes are not made for seeing but the action of seeing is the result of that special system that is found in the eyes, and the mind is not for thinking and contemplating but thoughts come out of the material setup of the mind as the yellow bile comes out of the liver. It is an absurdity to determine the biological action of things as their purpose and to try to find in them any wisdom and purposefulness.

If this concept is accepted then there would be no reasonable basis for accepting the necessity of the next life, because a universe which is run by blind nature without any purpose will not be more than a toy itself, and whatever it does is all in vain, is absurd, and will perish. Blind nature cannot be attributed with the quality of justice; even if justice were attributed to nature, it is useless, since man is nothing but a toy in nature's hand, having no will and no power of choice. In that case, he would not be responsible for his good and bad deeds, just as a motor vehicle is not supposed to be responsible for moving in the right way or the wrong way and the question of

consequences, even in this world does not arise then how can the necessity of the consequences in the Hereafter be accepted?

However, this concept is totally against reason, no reasonable proof, and no evidence of knowledge has been produced in support of this concept. Whatever has been said in favour of the concept, its essence is that we do not see anyone who is running this universe and we do not see any purpose behind this universe. We see it working without a maker. Neither it is possible to know its purpose, nor do we need to know the purpose. However, to be unaware of anything's final cause and first cause does not mean that no final cause and originator exist. Suppose, as a hypothesis, a child sees a printing machine working, he does not know the purpose of the machine, so he thinks that it is nothing but a toy that is moving without any ultimate purpose. He observes all the functions of the machine including the final action of the machine, the printing of the papers. And he thinks that the printing also is the natural result of machine's working as the other movements of the machine are the natural results of its working. He is not able to understand that among the many functions of the machine the final function of printing the papers is the only purpose of creating the machine. The child does not have such a power of observation that he could understand how wisely the parts of machine have been assembled, what great cohesion and consistency has been given to all of its parts and their functions. So the child thinks that the machine's existence is the result of getting together of a few pieces of iron, accidentally. The child's intellect is not mature so he could reach the conclusion that such a great machine whose parts, functions, final purpose, and design all show that it has been made by a person of ingenuity and knowledge, and it has been made for a specific service. It is obvious that no man of sound reason would accept the observation and opinion of the child.

If this kind of opinion is not acceptable then how can it be a valid explanation for the scheme of the universe, whose smallest particle gives evidence that there is a living Creator

with His knowledge, will, and wisdom behind this great universe.

A Wise System Cannot Be Purposeless

The arguments built by the Qur'an are all based on the belief that the Maker of this universe is a wise Creator; His every action is full of wisdom. Nothing can be attributed to Him, which is against wisdom. After establishing this foundation, the Qur'an says,

> Did you then think that We had created you in jest, and that you would not be brought back to Us (for account). (Al-Muminun – 23:115)
>
> Does man think that he will be left uncontrolled (without purpose). (Al-Qiyamat – 75:36)
>
> We created not the heaven, the earth, and all between them, merely in (idle) sport; We created them not except for just ends, but most of them do not know. Verily the day of sorting out is the time appointed for all of them. (Ad-Dukhan – 44:38–40)
>
> Do they not reflect in their own minds? Not but in truth and for a term appointed, did Allah create the heavens and the earth, and all between them; yet are there truly many among men who deny their meeting with their Lord. (Ar-Rum – 30:8)

In these verses it has been shown that if the universe ends without achieving any purpose then its creation will have been an act of vanity and absurdity, and it will be just a game; such an action cannot be attributed to a wise person. If you believe that God is wise then you have to accept that nothing in this universe is purposeless. Especially the human being, who is the main creation of God, and who has been given many fine qualities: intellect, will power, and power of choice. How can the purpose of his creation be so absurd that after living like a machine he just passes away and becomes extinct?

What the End of the Universe Should Be According to Wisdom?

When we come to know that the universe is not just a frivolous game and that nothing in it is purposeless then another question arises: What is the final purpose of this universe, which conforms to wisdom? The Qur'an has given the answer to this question in detail, which satisfies anyone who has a sound mind, but for understanding the answer, we have to bear in mind a few things:

1. All the signs of the universe give evidence that the direction of its movement and changes are toward evolution, and removing the defects of things, making them complete and perfect.
2. The law of evolution has a pattern of change; therefore, it embraces construction and destruction side by side; the birth of one thing implies the extinction of another thing. The extinction of a defective thing is the prelude to a perfect thing coming into being. Changes are frequent, but after some minor changes, a big change occurs, which is the major destruction that is called death or declination. The period between the birth of a thing and its death is called its life span.
3. Everything of this universe requires a specific body suitable to it, nothing can live in a body or an environment that does not suit it; for example, an animal body does not suit any botanical thing; and a human being requires that special body which suits him. If a thing is to evolve, it is necessary to discard the old body and to construct a new one that would be suitable to the new form.
4. After understanding the universal effect of the law of evolution over the parts of the world, it is not beyond understanding that the same law can be applied to the whole universe. We cannot say how many universes came into being and completed their span of age before the time of this universe in which we are now living. In the same way this universe is not the last or final

universe; whenever this universe reaches its age limits, it will have to be broken into pieces; and a new universe will come into being with different laws and with different capacities for receiving more perfect stages of life.

5. After contemplating the present system of the universe, we clearly feel that this system is imperfect and needs more evolution. In this universe, the realities of things are so mixed with material things that the appearance or external guise of the facts has acquired the status of realities. Anything that is more delicate and freer from materialistic matter is more pure, more hidden, and more out of reach of human senses and minds in the present system of the universe. Here in this universe a heavy or solid material body has weight, but delicate, fine, and unmixed realities have no weight. Here wood and stone are measurable but the laws of this universe have no provision for weighing and measuring the intellect, imagination, opinion, intention, will, feelings or insight. Here a corn can be weighed but there is no pair of scales that can weigh love and hate. In the world, you can measure a cloth, but there is no gadget for measuring malice or jealousy. Here the value of coins can be determined but to determine the value of the incentive that inspires generous spending or stinginess is impossible. This is the shortcoming of the system of this universe. The reason demands another more evolved system where realities do need a material guise and could manifest themselves to the naked eye; where delicacy and fineness could dominate over material grossness, and whatever is now hidden could become open to view. In addition, the shortcoming of this system is that here, in this world, the material laws are dominant and because of the effects of actions conform to the requirements of the material laws. And such results are not true to wisdom and intellect. Here if you kindle the fire, every inflammable thing will burn.

And if you pour the water, every drenchable object will become wet. But if a good deed is performed, its fruit may not necessarily be sweet, while logically, a good deed should be rewarded. But since the result will appear according to material laws, it might not reward virtue. Seeing this shortcoming, reason demands a developed system for the universe, where instead of material laws, laws of morality and reason should prevail, and those real effects of actions could appear which cannot now appear in this universe because of the domination of the material laws of nature.

The End of the Universe

After understanding these precepts, now consider the details of the day of resurrection and the life after death, drawn by the Qur'an, and what answer you get to your question from it?

We created not the heavens and the earth and all between them but for just ends, and for a term appointed. (Al-Ahqaf – 46:3)

He has subjected the sun and the moon! Each one runs its (course) for a term appointed. (Ar-Ra'd – 13:2)

When the sky is cleft asunder; when the stars are scattered; when the oceans are suffered to burst forth; and when the graves are turned upside down. (Al-Infitar – 82:1–3)

When the sun (with its spacious light) is folded up; when the stars fall, losing their luster; when the mountains vanish (like a mirage). (At-Takwir – 81:1–3)

Then when the stars become dim; when the heaven is cleft asunder; when the mountains are scattered (to the winds) as dust. (Al-Mursalat – 77:8–10)

At length, when the sight is dazed and the moon is buried in darkness, and the sun and moon are joined together. (Al-Qiyamat – 75:7–9)

And the earth is moved, and its mountains, and they are crushed at one stroke. (Al-Haqqa – 69:14)

> One day the earth will be changed to a different earth, and so will be the heavens, and (men) will be marshaled forth, before Allah, the One, the Irresistible. (Ibrahim – 14:48)

All these statements of the Qur'an show that the universe has an appointed age. It is not eternal, when it completes its term its whole system will be broken, all planets, including the sun, moon, earth and the other planets, which are the pillars of this system, will scatter and collapse into one another, and this present temporary edifice of the universe will fall apart. But it does not mean that the life of the world will cease to exist and the work of creation will stop; actually the Qur'an means that the pattern of life we see in this system of the universe will be changed and another system will be created for life as indicated in verse 14 of chapter 48 (Ibrahim). It says, "One day the earth will be changed to a different earth."

What Will the System of the World Be After Death?

How will that system be? Whatever the Qur'an has said about it clearly shows that it will remove the shortcomings of the system of our present universe... the system of that universe will be a developed or evolved form of this universe'. It will be exactly the same as human nature and reason demand. In that system you will find all types of calculations, such as weighing, scaling, and marking, but this measuring will not be for material things it will be for fine, delicate, unmixed, pure and transparent realities. The things measured there will be goodness and evil, belief and fidelity, and good and bad habits. Intentions and aims will be weighed, whatever you hide in your heart will be opened, the bread and the money given by you to the needy will not be weighed or counted, but your intention will be weighed and counted, that which motivated you to the spending. Measures and values will be different because the laws there will not be based on matter, they will be based on morality and reason. As the Qur'an describes,

> And pursue not that of which you have no knowledge; for surely the hearing, the sight, the heart – all of those shall be questioned. (Al-Israa – 17:36)

> We shall set up scales of justice on the Day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt unjustly in the least. And if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed.... We will bring it (to account) and enough are We to take account. (Al-Anbiyaa – 21:47)

> The balance that day will be true (weighing), those whose scale (of good) will be heavy will prosper; those whose scale (of good) will be light will find their souls in perdition for that they wrongly treated Our Signs. (Al-A'raf – 7:8–9)

> On that day will men proceed in groups sorted out, to be shown the deeds that they (had done). Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it. (Al-Zalzalah – 99:6–8)

In the system of that universe, all those things will become patent, which were latent in this world because of the limitations of the material laws of this universe. There all those realities will be laid bare which are concealed and covered here in this universe, and everything will appear in its real character. As the Qur'an says,

> (It will be said) You were heedless on this; now have We removed your veil, and sharp is your sight this day! (Qaf – 50:22)

> That day shall you be brought to judgment: not an act of yours that you hide will be hidden. (Al-Haqqa – 69:18)

There will appear those real effects of the actions, which conform to reason and justice. The material laws of this present system (that do not allow the real effects of the action to appear) will be changed in that world. No things which were a hindrance in the way of justice and just consequence here in this world will exist in the Hereafter. For example, here in this world people succeed in escaping from the consequences of their evil actions. They use their wealth, the power of their supporters and friends, recommendations, influence of their family and tribe, or their own cleverness and tactics. But in the

Hereafter all these factors will be missing and every action will have its consequence according to justice and truth. As the Qur'an says,

> There will every soul see (the fruits of) the deeds it sent before; they will be brought back to Allah their rightful Lord, and their invented falsehoods will leave them in the lurch. (Yunus – 10:30)
>
> But how (will they fare) when We gather them together against a day about which there is no doubt, and each soul will be paid out just what it has earned, without (favour or) injustice? (Al-i-Imran – 3:25)
>
> On the day when every soul will be confronted with all the good it has done, and all the evil it has done. (Al-i-Imran – 3:30)
>
> Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another nor shall intercession be accepted for her. Not shall compensation be taken from her nor shall anyone be held (from out side). (Al-Baqarah – 2:48)
>
> Then when the trumpet is blown, there will be no relationships between them that day, nor will one ask after another! Then those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy, they will be successful. But those whose balance is light will be those who have lost their souls; in Hell they will abide. (Al-Muminun – 23:101–103)
>
> The day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail but only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart. (Ash-Shu'araa – 26:89)
>
> And behold! You come to us bare and alone as We created you for the first time: You have left behind you all (the favours) which We bestowed on you: We see not with you your intercessors whom you thought to be partners in your affairs: so now all relations between you have been cut off, and your (pet) fancies have left you in the lurch! (Al-An'am – 6:94)
>
> Of no profit to you will be your relatives and your children on the Day of Judgment: He will judge between you: for Allah sees well what you do. (Al-Mumtahana – 60:3)

> That day shall a man flee from his own brother, from his mother and father, and from his wife and his children, each one of them, that day, will have enough concern (of his own) to make him indifferent to the others. (Abasa – 80:34–37)

The shortcoming of the present system is that the granting of rewards for good deeds does not depend on their individual goodness, it depends on some other factors; personal ability is one of them, but this factor is weakened, and often wiped out by other powerful factors. This comes about because when rewards are granted in this world, personal ability or eligibility is not counted, or if it is counted, it counts the least. Here, a person can enjoy all the worldly luxuries and comforts despite his lifelong wrongdoings and wickedness. On the contrary, a pious person suffers from hardships during his whole life. This shortcoming of the system needs a change. Human reason demands a new and developed system in which consequences should be administered according to justice, and every person should be given rewards or punishment according to his personal position, as he deserves. The Qur'an says the system in the next world will be the same.

> Shall We treat those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, the same as those who do mischief on earth? Shall we treat those who guard against evil, the same as those who turn aside from the right? (Sad – 38:28)

> What! Do those who do evil deeds think that We shall make them as equal with those who believe and do righteous deeds, – that equal will be their life and their death? Ill is the judgment that they make. (Al-Jathiya – 45:21)

> To all are degrees (or ranks) according to their deeds: for your Lord is not unmindful of anything that they do. (Al-An'am – 6:132)

> To the righteous the garden will be brought near. And to those straying in evil the fire will be placed in full view. (Ash-Shu'araa – 26:90–91)

This is the model of the next world that has been presented by the Qur'an, the last messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him) and all other messengers of God (peace be upon them). But those who think that the world is nothing but a plaything, a toy, and a purposeless ado, which began vaguely and will end in vagueness, will find nothing in this model acceptable. On the contrary, anyone who understands that the universe has been created by God and God is All Wise, after contemplating these arguments, will surely reach the conclusion that at the end of this universe the creation of another universe will occur and is necessary.

When the possibility and the necessity of the life after death has been proved, then it should be enough to believe that God will certainly create the other universe.

It has become clear from this discussion that Islam's call to believe in the Hereafter is not beyond understanding and reason. It is the very demand of reason and wisdom, and no progress of knowledge can damage this belief; but the progress should be real progress, not merely a facade.

The Necessity to Believe in the Hereafter

Up to this point, the discussion has proved the possibility and the necessity of the Hereafter and that real progress of knowledge and reason will not deter people from believing in the Hereafter; instead, they will be encouraged by their progress to believe.

But the question is: Why should the concept of the Hereafter be believed in? Why has it been included in the beliefs (*Imaniat*)? Why has it been given such an emphasis that without believing in the Hereafter none can be called a Muslim? Why has it been given so much importance that without it all beliefs, such as belief in God, His Messengers and Holy Books, will all become null and void and all good deeds of no avail. It can be said that the concept of the Hereafter is like other concepts of metaphysics. No doubt the concept of the Hereafter has become well-established by strong arguments, and there are solid grounds to accept it, but proving

a thing by reasoning or convincing arguments does not mean that you have to believe in it, and that it should be the criterion for accepting a person as a believer or an unbeliever. There are various other concepts relating to metaphysics, and they also have been proved by strong arguments, so then why have they not been included in the beliefs (*Imaniat*)?

Had the belief in the Hereafter been treated as a matter of metaphysics then the objection would have had enough weight, and there would be no reasonable basis for making the belief in the Hereafter an essential part of the faith, because a matter solely of metaphysics has no effect on man's practical life. If we have no idea of it or we reject the idea of it, it does not have any effect on our moral and practical life. But when we contemplate the subject of the life-after-death, then we come to know that it is not merely a philosophical phenomenon, it is deeply related to man's moral and practical life. With its acceptance man's concept about the world and worldly affairs undergoes fundamental changes; to believe in the Hereafter implies the concept of being answerable and accountable. Then man has to understand that his failure or success in the Hereafter depends on his deeds, as to whether they are good or evil.

Rejecting this belief means that man thinks himself independent and unaccountable to anybody and plans the program of his whole life with the idea that he is not answerable for his deeds. He thinks that there is no life after death, where he might face the consequences of his deeds.

The inevitable result of not having this belief in the Hereafter, or rejecting it, will be that man's focus will always be on those effects which appear out of his actions in this world, and these effects will become the criterion of the beneficiality or harmfulness of his actions to him in this life. Naturally, he will not eat poisonous things and he will not burn his hand in fire because he believes that the result of these actions will be death or serious injuries. But he will not restrain himself from evil deeds like wrongdoing to others, injustice, telling lies, backbiting, deceit, fornication, nor from other evil

deeds, because he does not see the bad effects of these evil deeds immediately. He may refrain from these things if they are harmful to his life, health, or bar any other material gain; on the contrary, if he sees that they are not harmful to him in any respect he may not hesitate to commit them.

Briefly, according to this concept, man will not have a fixed moral value for a particular deed, because while evaluating the action he will not see the material benefits or harms of that deed. On the contrary, the person who believes in the Hereafter will see both the results, which ensure in this world and in the Hereafter too; and he will determine the values of deeds according to those final results which will appear in his next life. His belief about the fatality of telling lies and of deceit will be as strong as his belief about the mischief of fire and of poison. In the same way, he feels that as water and bread are useful to him, trustworthiness, justice, and piety are also beneficial to him.

He believes that each deed has its results, and a fixed value, whether the results appear in this world or not, and they will certainly appear in the next world. He has fixed moral values for moral deeds, and those values will not change according to the material benefits and losses of this world.

In his moral system truthfulness, trustworthiness, and justice will always be right and good deeds, whether or not they prove unrewarding in this world, will be considered right. In the same way lies, wrongdoing, and treachery will always be wrong and evil whether they prove advantageous in this world or not.

Therefore, we concluded that the meaning of rejecting belief in the Hereafter is not just rejecting a concept of metaphysics. No, it means that man has become neglectful of his responsible position and wrongfully assumes himself independent and unaccountable and is satisfied with the incomplete and often-deluding results of this world, and its showy life, and after becoming neglectful of final gains and losses, he takes the transitory material gains of this world as valuable things. He gives too much moral value to his deeds

that are always changing, inconsistent, and deceiving. He becomes deprived of a rightful and stable moral system, whose stability depends on a foundation of fixed moral values; and in this way, he leads his whole life in an unstable, wrongful moral system. This system shows an actual loss as a real gain; and true gain as real loss; real beauty as real ugliness and vice versa.

These are the results of rejecting the belief in the Hereafter mentioned by the Holy Qur'an. If you go through the verses of the Qur'an, you will see that it has pointed out one by one all of those bad results which are the outcome of rejecting the belief in the Hereafter.

1. Man assumes that his creation is purposeless; he is independent, not answerable to anybody; his life as a whole seems futile and no one is watching him, who finally will take account of all of his deeds. The Qur'an says,

> Did you then think that We had created you in jest, and that you would not be brought back to Us (for account)? (Al-Mu'minun – 23:115)
>
> Does man think that he will be left uncontrolled (without purpose)? (Al-Qiyamat – 75:36)
>
> Thinks he, that none has power over him? He may say (boastfully) wealth I have squandered in abundance! (Al-Balad – 90:5–6)

2. Such a person sees the world, as it appears from outside, and he treats the preliminary results appearing on the surface as final and real results and, being deceived by them, forms a wrongful opinion. The Qur'an says,

> They know but the outer (things) in the life of this world: but of the Hereafter they are heedless. (Ar-Rum – 30:7)
>
> Those who rest not their hope on the meeting with Us, but are pleased and satisfied with the life of the present and those who heed not Our signs, their abode is the fire because of the (evil) they earned. (Yunus – 10:7–8)
>
> Or rather, (you men) but you love the fleeting life, and leave alone the Hereafter. (Al-Qiyamat – 75:20–21)

> No (behold), you prefer the life of this world but the Hereafter is better and more enduring. (Al-A'la – 87:16–17)

> Such as took their religion to be mere amusement and play, and were deceived by the life of the world. (Al-A'raf – 7:51)

3. The result of holding the world as it appears from outside is that man sees the criterion of moral values upside down, so those things which are harmful in their final results appear to him beneficial because of their immediate gains; therefore his worldly efforts go astray, and finally go waste. The Qur'an points this out,

> So he went forth among his people in the (pride of his worldly) glitter. Said those who were desirous of the life of the world: "Ah! That we had the like of what Qarun has got!" For he is truly a lord of mighty good fortune! But those who had been granted (true) knowledge said: "Alas (in the Hereafter) the reward of Allah is best for those who believe and work righteousness; but this shall none attain, save those who steadfastly persevere." (Al-Qasas – 28:79 –80)

> As to those who believe not in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds pleasing in their eyes; and so they wander blindly. (An-Naml – 27:4)

> Do they think that because We have granted them abundance of wealth and sons. We would hasten them on every good. No, they do not perceive. (Al-Mu'minun – 23:55–56)

> Say: 'Shall We tell you of those who lose most in respect of their deeds? Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life, while they thought that they were acquiring good by their works. They are those who deny the signs of their Lord and the fact of their having to meet Him (in the Hereafter): vain will be their works, nor shall We, on the Day of Judgment, give them any weight.' (Al-Kahf – 18:103–105)

4. Such a person will never accept the true way of life (*Din-e-Haque*), whenever you present to him the ways of noble actions, righteous deeds, and rightness of conduct, he will reject them right away. If you present to him those concepts

and deeds which are against righteousness, he will accept them immediately. Because the ways of true religion demand to sacrifice many gains and luxuries of worldly life, but the rejecter of the Hereafter considers the worldly gains as the real gains, so he will never prepare himself to follow those right ways that demand sacrifices. Briefly, rejecting the Hereafter is contradictory to following the right ways of the true religion. Anybody who rejects the belief in the Hereafter cannot be a follower of the way of life (Islam, the true religion). The Qur'an declares,

> Those who behave arrogantly on the earth in defiance of right – them will I turn away from my signs; even if they see all the signs, they will not believe in them; and if they see the way of right conduct, they will not adopt it as the way; but if they see the way of error, that is the way they will adopt. For they have rejected Our signs, and failed to take warning from them. Those who reject Our signs and the meeting in the Hereafter, vain are their deeds: can they expect to be rewarded except as they have wrought? (Al-A'raf – 7:146–147)

5. The refusal to believe in the Hereafter affects man's whole moral and practical life. He becomes arrogant and rebellious.

> Your God is One God: as to those who believe not in the Hereafter, their hearts refuse to know, and they are arrogant. (An-Nahl – 16:22)

> And he was arrogant and insolent in the land, beyond reason, he and his hosts: they thought that they would not have to return to Us! (Al-Qasas – 28:39)

Such a person's dealings become corrupt. The Qur'an says,

> Woe to those that deal in fraud, those who, when they have to receive by measure from men, exact full measure, but when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due. Do they not think that they will be called to account? On a Mighty Day. (Al-Mutaffifeen – 83:1–5)

Such a person becomes stony-hearted, narrow-minded, deceitful, selfish, and refuses to obey and worship God. The Qur'an says,

> Have you observed him who denies the judgment (to come)? Then such is the one who repulses the orphan, and encourages not the feeding of the indigent. So woes to the worshippers who are neglectful of their prayers, those who want to be seen, but refuse (to supply) (even) neighbourly needs. (Al-Ma'un – 107:1–7)

In brief, the inevitable result of rejecting the Hereafter is that man becomes a transgressor and falls into sins. The Qur'an says, "And none can deny it but the transgressor beyond bounds. The Sinner!" (Al-Mutaffifeen – 83:12).

The consequences of rejecting the belief in Hereafter or being void of it are enormous. We have already seen the results of the culture which has been built on material and worldly concepts and that are totally void of belief in the Hereafter. It is an undeniable fact that with the rejection of the Hereafter it is not possible to establish a society on the foundation of the obedience to and worship of One God, following the true religion and noble conduct.

Islam calls people toward noble conduct and righteous deeds, which demand sacrifice of many worldly luxuries and assets. Islam also enjoins obedience and worship of God and purification of the soul. It brings no material gain in this world, or rather; it causes many hardships to man's body and soul. Moreover, Islam draws a line to distinguish permissible things from the prohibited ones and admonishes man not to go near the impermissible things. Besides this, Islam demands the sacrifice of individual goals, personal affections, and likings, and even wealth and life, for higher spiritual aims. In a nutshell, Islam controls man with a moral system which fixes the moral value of each and every thing. All these things are part of the Islamic way of life and its law (*Shariah*).

Could it be possible for Islam to establish its way of life and the law (*Shariah*) without the belief in the "Hereafter"? Would it possible for man to accept such instructions without

believing in the "Hereafter"? If the answers to these questions are negative, and surely they would be negative, then it has to be accepted that without instilling the belief in the Hereafter in the minds and hearts of people, a religious or moral system cannot be established. This is the reason for inclusion of the belief in the Hereafter as a fundamental part of Islamic beliefs (*Imaniat*). Because of this, after belief in God, no other belief has been given so much emphasis as the belief in the Hereafter has been given in Islam.

Now let us see how Islam has presented this belief, and what effects it creates on man's conduct and deeds.

Preference for the Hereafter

The first thing the Qur'an instils in the mind and heart of man is that the world is a transitory place. This life is not the only life for him; there is another life that is better than this one and also it will be eternal, its benefits are in abundance, much more than this world, and that other life's losses are worse than the losses of this world. Anybody who is deceived by world's enchantment and glitter and pursues its luxuries and gains and tries to achieve them by any means right or wrong, in fact, strikes a totally disadvantageous deal. In the same way if any person considers the losses of this world the real losses and, to save him from them, uses all means, good or evil, he will suffer enormous losses in the Hereafter. He commits a terrible blunder. His thinking and actions are against all wisdom. The Qur'an has discussed the same subject in many ways, repeatedly. It is not possible to refer to all the related verses of the Qur'an. A few verses of the Qur'an are cited here:

> What is the life of this world but amusement and play? But verily the home of the "Hereafter," that is life indeed, if they but knew. (Al-Ankabut – 29:64)

> ... Say: 'short is the enjoyment of this world; the Hereafter is the best for those who do right: never will you be dealt with unjustly in the very least!' (An-Nisaa – 4:77)

... Do you prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter? but little is the comfort of this life, as compared with the Hereafter?... (At-Tauba – 9:38)

No (behold), you prefer the life of this world; but the Hereafter is better and more enduring. (Al-A'la – 87:16–17)

Every soul shall have a taste of death: and only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense only he who is saved far from the fire and admitted to the garden will have succeeded; for the life of this world but goods and chattels of deception. (Al-i-Imran – 3:185)

... But the wrongdoers pursued the enjoyment of the good things of life which were given them, and persisted in sins. (Hud – 11:116)

... Say: 'truly, those in loss are those who lose their own souls and their people on the Day of Judgment: Ah! That is indeed the (real and) evident loss. (Az-Zumar – 39:15)

Then for such as had transgressed all bounds, and had preferred the life of this world, the abode will be the hell fire; and for such as had entertained the fear of standing before their Lord's (tribunal) and had restrained (their) soul from lower desires, their abode will be the Garden. (An-Nazi'at – 79:37–40)

Know you (all) that the life of this world is but play and pastime, adornment and mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children. Here is a similitude: how rain and the growth, which it brings forth, delights (the heart of) the tillers. Soon it withers; you will see it grow yellow; then it becomes dry and crumbles away but in the Hereafter is a chastisement severe (for the devotees of wrong) and forgiveness from Allah and His Good Pleasure (for the devotees of Allah). And what is the life of this world, but goods and chattels of deception? (Al-Hadid – 57:20)

Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: women and sons; heaped up hoards of gold and silver; horses branded (for blood and excellence); and (wealth) of cattle and well-tilled land. Such are the possessions of this

> world's life but with Allah is the best of the goals (to return to). Say: 'shall I give you glad tidings of things far better than those? For the righteous are gardens in nearness to their Lord with rivers flowing beneath; therein their eternal home; with spouses purified and the good pleasure of Allah, for in Allah's sight are (all) His servants.' (Al-i-Imran – 3:14–15)

Islam has taught in a very effective way how important for man is the eternal success in the Hereafter. For this success man has to sacrifice temporary gains of this world, and prepare himself to bear the losses of this transitory world so that he can save himself from the eternal losses in the Hereafter. The aim of Islam, by this admonition, is that anybody who believes in the Qur'an, and in the messengership of the last messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him), should follow the instructions given by the Book and the Messenger with his whole heart, so that he can save himself from losses in the Hereafter. He should refrain from all those things which will lead him to the hell fire, and should perform all those righteous deeds which will lead him to paradise in the Hereafter.

The Record of Deeds and the Court of God

The other thing the Qur'an instils in the heart of man is that all his actions, whether done openly or in secrecy, are being recorded. And this very well guarded record will be presented on the Day of Judgment before God's Court and everything coming into contact with the man in this world will appear as a witness against him, even the organs of his own body will give witness against him. Then the record of his deeds will be put on the scales.

The record of all of his good deeds will be placed on one side of the scales, and the record of bad deeds on the other side. If the record of the good deeds proves weightier, the success of the Hereafter will be his reward, and he will be sent into the garden (*Jannah*). If the record of his bad deeds is found weightier than his good deeds, enormous loss will be his lot,

and he will be sent to the worst place of the Hereafter that is called the hell fire.

In the Court of God, everybody will be presented only with his record of deeds, and nothing will be helpful for him from the worldly means. The nobility descent, nor superiority of wealth and power, nor of intercession will be of any use to him. The Qur'an in detail and in an effective way has also presented this subject. A few verses of the Qur'an are cited here as an illustration.

> It is the same (to Him) whether any of you conceal his speech or declare it openly; whether he lie hid by night or walk forth freely by day. For each (such person) there are (angels) in succession before and behind him by command of Allah.... (Ar-Ra'd – 13:10–11)

> And the book (of deeds) will be placed (before you); and you will see the sinful in great terror because of what is (recorded) therein; they will say. 'Ah! Woe to us! What a book is this! It leaves out nothing small or great, but takes account there of!' They will find all that they did, placed before them and not one will your Lord treat with injustice. (Al-Kahf – 18:49)

Organs Bearing Witness and Self-Confession

> On the day when their tongues, their hands and their feet will bear witness against them as to their actions. (An-Nur – 24:24)

> At length, when they reach the (fire), their hearing, their sight, their skins will bear witness against them, as to all their deeds. They will say to their skins 'why bear you witness against us?' They will say: 'Allah has given us speech, (He) who gives speech to every thing: He created you for the first time, and unto Him you to return. You did not seek to hide yourselves, lest your hearing, your sight, and your skins should bear witness against you! But you did think that Allah knew not many of the things that you used to do!' (Fussilat – 41:20–22)

> ... So against themselves will they bear witness that they rejected faith. (Al-An'am – 6:130)

Man will be brought into the Court of God with this record of his deeds and these witnesses. Just imagine in what plight he will be! Will he not stand there alone and helpless? The Qur'an relates the situation in the following words:

> And behold! You come to Us bare and alone as We created you for the first time; you have left behind you, (all the favour) which We bestowed on you; We see not with you your intercessor whom you thought to be partners in your affairs; so now all relations between you have been cut off, and your (pet) fancies have left you in the lurch. (Al-An'am – 6:94)

Everybody will himself submit his account.

> Every man's fate We have fastened on his own neck: on the Day of Judgment We shall bring out for him a scroll which he will see spread open. (It will be said to him) read your own record sufficient is your soul this day to make out an account against you. (Al-Israa – 17:13–14)

Ancestral influences will be of no avail. "Of no profit to you will be your relatives and your children on the Day of Judgment: He will judge between you: for Allah sees well all that you do" (Al-Mumtahana – 60:3).

Intercession Will Not Work

"...No intimate friend nor intercessors will the wrongdoers have, who could be listened to" (Gafir – 40:18).

Bribes Will Be of No Avail

"The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail. (Ash-Shu'araa – 26:88)

Deeds will be scaled. Atom's weight will be counted.

> We shall set up scales of justice for the Day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least and if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed. We

> will bring it (to account): and enough are We to take account. (Al-Anbiyaa – 21:47)

Consequences will conform to deeds.

> And thou wilt see every sect bowing the knee. Every sect will be called to its account. 'This day shall you be recompensed for all you did! (Al-Jathiya – 45:28)

> To all are degrees (or ranks) according to their deeds: for your Lord is not unmindful of anything that they do. (Al-An'am – 6:132)

It is the police and the court the fear of which has been instilled into the heart of man. This police and court are quite different from the police and the court of the Hereafter. Nobody can escape from the eyes of this police nor from the judgment of this court. No influence, bribe or false witnesses will avail there. The court will have the complete record of man's each intention and action. Nobody can escape from his punishment and no one will be deprived of a just reward for his good deeds.

The Advantage of This Belief

In this way, Islam has made "belief in the Hereafter" as a strong bulwark, for its moral law and legal system (*Shariah*). On one side, it prepares its followers mentally as well as emotionally to do righteous deeds and restrain them from spreading mischief. On the other hand, it makes them believe that they will certainly be rewarded for their good deeds and face consequences for their wrongdoings. Islam does not depend on any material power or governing authority for the existence and stability of its system.

Making "belief in the Hereafter" its base, Islam creates in man a strong conscience (or accusing soul) that reproves him for his bad deeds, and creates in him an inspiring spirit that encourages him to perform good deeds. Islam's sole purpose is to save man from failure in the Hereafter and to lead him to success in the Hereafter; therefore, Islam instructs him to do those good deeds which are good because of their final results

in the next world, and admonishes him not to commit those bad deeds which are bad because of their final results in the life after death.

Because of this, the Qur'an uses the "belief in the Hereafter" as the basis of its teaching of noble conduct. Whenever it gives instruction to do any good deed and refrain from any sin, it reminds man that the day will come when he will meet his Lord. As the Qur'an says, "... And fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him (in the Hereafter)..." (Al-Baqarah – 2:223).

When the believers are encouraged to sacrifice their lives in the way of God, they are assured that if they are killed, in fact, they are not dead, but they are alive and enjoy eternal life. As the Qur'an says, "And say not of those who are slain in the way of Allah: they are dead. No, they are living, though you perceive (it) not" (Al-Baqarah – 2:154).

When patience is taught, saying that Allah's favour and mercy will be their share, as the Qur'an says, solaces the believers:

> They are those on whom (descend) Blessings from your Lord, and Mercy.... (Al-Baqarah – 2:157)
>
> ....But those who were convinced that they must meet Allah, said: "how oft, by Allah's Will, has a small force vanquished a big one? Allah is with those who steadfastly persevere." (Al-Baqarah – 2:249)

The Qur'an strengthens the believers in adverse conditions by saying: "....Say: the fire of Hell is fiercer in heat" (At-Tauba – 9:81).

The believers are persuaded to spend generously in the way of God, by saying, "Whatever good you give shall be rendered back to you, and you shall not be dealt with unjustly" (Al-Baqarah – 2:272). Covetousness conversely damns:

> And let not those who covetously withhold of the gifts which Allah has given them of His Grace, think that it is good for them: No, it will be the worse for them: soon it will be tied to their necks like a twisted collar, on the Day of Judgment.... (Al-i-Imran – 3:180)

In order to persuade the people to forgo the benefits of usury, the Qur'an admonishes:

> O you who believe! Fear Allah, and give up what remains of your demand for usury, if you are indeed believers. (Al-Baqarah – 2:278)

> And fear the day when you shall be brought back to Allah. Then shall every soul be paid what it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly. (Al-Baqarah – 2:281)

To teach the believers that they should not envy the affluence of wrongdoers and should be free from the desire of having wealth in the world, the Qur'an Instructs:

> Let not the strutting about of the unbelievers through the land deceive you. Little is it for enjoyment: their ultimate abode is Hell; what an evil bed (to lie on)! On the other hand, for those who fear their Lord, are Gardens, with rivers flowing beneath, therein are they to dwell (for ever), a gift from Allah; and that which is from Allah is the best (bliss) for the righteous. (Al-i-Imran – 3:196–198)

The Importance of Beliefs of Islamic Civilizations

We have discussed in detail all the five branches of belief. What does Islam say about each of them? What position does belief have intellectually and critically? What effects does it exercise on human character? What part does it play in the establishment and formation of civilization?

Answers to these questions have already been given in the previous chapters, and we hope they have been noted properly.

It has been stated in the very first chapters that the position of a human being on this earth is not like the position of any other creature; he is the viceroy of God on this planet. This concept about the human being's position prescribes his goal of life, that is, to seek the pleasure of his Creator and Lord, and this is logically correct.

For achieving this goal, a few requirements, mentioned below, are essential for man to fulfil.

1. He has to acquire knowledge about God.

2. He has to know the ways through which he can win the pleasure of God.
3. After knowing those ways, he has to lead his life according to them.
4. He has to know the consequences of God's anger and His pleasure so that he may not be deceived by the incomplete results of this world.

The five beliefs, which have been discussed in detail in previous chapters, fulfil these requirements completely.

Whatever the Qur'an has described about God and His attributes, its purpose is to give man the correct knowledge about God, Whose viceroy he is and seeking Whose pleasure is his goal.

The Qur'an has given the necessary knowledge about angels so that man could know their real position as God's slaves, and that they have no divinity in them.

After this correct knowledge, the true meaning of belief in God is for man to accept the sovereignty of God over both parts of his life, first that in which he is helpless (his natural disposition), the second in which he makes decisions and has freedom of choice (as to eat something or not). In addition, man should not forget that God is the lawgiver, and man is nothing but a follower of the laws given by God, so man should use the powers within the limits ordained by God for him. This kind of firm belief prepares man to surrender before the sovereignty of God willingly. This belief creates in man a conscience and a behaviour of a special kind, which is necessary for following the laws voluntarily.

The belief in Messengers of God and in the Book of God fulfils the third requirement, mentioned above. Through these two means, the Book and the Messenger, man comes to know the ways and laws made by God and acquires knowledge about the limits for the use of power.

To understand and accept that the teaching of the Messenger is the teaching of God, and that the book presented by the Messenger is the book of God is called the belief in Messengers and belief in the Book.

With this belief man becomes able to live by and follow firmly the laws and ways shown to him by God through His messenger and the Book.

For fulfilling the last requirement, man has to acquire knowledge about the Hereafter. With this knowledge, his insight becomes so sharp that he begins to see another world behind the curtain of this glittering world. In addition, he comes to know that affluence or poverty or material gains or losses of this world are not the real index of the pleasure or displeasure of God, and that the operation of the consequences of deeds does not end in this world. The final account will be taken in the Hereafter. The way of coming out in the clear from that scrutiny is to abide by the laws given by God during life in this world. After the belief in God, the belief in the Hereafter is the strongest factor, which spurs man to abide by divine laws. This belief plays a major role in preparing man mentally for Islamic civilization.

Throughout this discussion, it has been clarified that these fundamental beliefs are deeply related to the concept of this world, given by Islam.

Islamic civilization is built on the same concept. This kind of civilization requires a fundamental doctrine, this requirement is fulfilled perfectly by the above-discussed five beliefs (*Imaniat*). Any doctrine other than these five beliefs does not have the potential to become the foundation of this civilization and is not suitable for this particular concept and goal of life.

The Layout of Islamic Civilization

By looking at the details of the beliefs (*Imaniat*) that have been stated above, the whole layout of this civilization comes in clear view, as has been established by the five beliefs (*Imaniat*).

The prominent features of this layout are given below:

1. The system of this civilization is like the system of a kingdom. In this kingdom, the status of God is not merely that of a deity that is worshiped. His status is different from the

concept of God that is commonly held about Him. According to the worldly concept, He is Absolute Ruler. He is the King of Kings or Emperor of this vast kingdom. The Messenger is His representative and the Qur'an is His Book of Law. Anyone who accepts His sovereignty and obeys the commands of His representative, the messenger, is eligible to become a denizen of His kingdom. The meaning of being a Muslim is that whatever laws have been given by the King through His messenger or the Book of Law should be followed without questioning whether the rationale of a particular law is understood or not. Anyone who does not accept the absolute sovereignty of God and that His law is above all opinions formed by individuals or their groups, anyone who wants to reserve his right to accept or reject God's decree will not have a place as His subject in His Kingdom.

2. The sole purpose of this civilization is to prepare man for his final success (in other words to honour him with the pleasure of God in His final Judgment in the Hereafter). Man's final success depends on right conduct in his personal life. To decide which action is beneficial or harmful is very difficult for him, because of his inadequate knowledge. It is God Who knows. Therefore, Islamic civilization demands that man follow the ways shown by God in all lifestyles and man must restrict his freedom of action within the limitations of Divine Law (*Shariah*).

In this way, Islamic civilization encompasses both this world and the next (*din* and *Dunya*). As the word *religion* has a limited sense, it cannot be used for Islamic civilization. Islam or Islamic civilization is not just a religion; it is a vast system that encompasses man's individual and collective life completely, his thoughts and opinions, his character and conduct, his private and social life, his culture and politics. Whatever laws have been framed by God for all sections of life, the whole body of these laws is called the way of Islam or Islamic civilization.

3. This civilization is not a national or racial civilization. In a true sense, it is a human civilization. It addresses man, and

brings anyone into its circle who believes in the Oneness of God, in His messengers, in His books, and in the Day of Judgment.

In this way, it has formed a type of nationality. Everybody can become part of it without any discrimination of colour, race, or language. It has the potential of spreading all its words over the earth and turning all of humanity into one nation. But the real purpose of establishing a universal civilization is not merely increasing the numbers of its followers. It is to benefit all of its followers with the correct knowledge endowed by God for the betterment of all. Because of this, its first condition for entering into its brotherhood is belief. It chooses only those men who are ready to surrender before the absolute sovereignty of God, and to accept those limits, and the laws ordained by God through His messenger and His Book. Because only people of such kind (however few they may be) are able to become part of this civilization and to establish a strong and righteous system. Rejecters, hypocrites, or people of weak faith cannot make this system strong, they will make it weak.

4. With its quality of inclusiveness and universality, another distinguishing feature is its great discipline, or strong bond, through which it makes its followers law-abiding, in their individual and collective life. Before framing laws, it makes the necessary arrangements to make sure that its laws are obeyed. At first it demands that man accept the sovereignty of God, and then instils in his mind and heart that whatever commands have been given through the Messenger and the Book are, in fact, commands of God, and to obey them is to obey God. Then it creates an invisible monitor in his soul which constantly urges him to obedience, rebukes him for his every rebellious act, and warns him about the severe torment in the Hereafter. In this way, it establishes a self-enforcing power in his soul so that he may follow the laws voluntarily. After this it presents laws and ways of living an obedient life and demands from him the highest sacrifices. There can be no other way wiser or more effective than this. Through this method, Islamic civilization has achieved such a great influence over its

followers that no other civilization in human history can match it.

5. Like some other worldly societies, Islamic civilization strives to establish a just system and clean society, but the creation of such a society is not possible until its followers are equipped with noble conduct and morale. And this cannot be achieved without purifying the souls of these followers. Their hearts and minds must be free from low or mean and conflicting thoughts. They should have strong character, and righteous actions should flow from them easily, as such, actions are intrinsic in their nature. Islam has greatly emphasized this method of first instilling belief in the hearts of the followers and then has trained them. The training strengthens the roots of belief and that is the most effective means to build a strong character. This is the belief through which Islam inculcates the fine moral qualities in the lives of its followers, traits like truthfulness, trustworthiness, sincerity, accountability, self-control, self-respect, humbleness, open-mindedness, courage, and spirit of sacrifice. Islam teaches people to be dutiful, steadfast and brave, content, obedient and law-abiding. With individuals having these fine qualities, Islam creates a just society.

6. The beliefs (*Imaniat*) have all those powers that create in man noble conduct and high morals. It develops them and preserves them. Besides this, the *Imaniat* encourages man to achieve progress in his worldly affairs and enables him to use worldly means in the best way, using all the talents given by God, with moderation. Then the very beliefs develop those fine skills that are necessary for real progress in this world. They have tremendous power to discipline man's practical skills, and to bring them into action in a planned way; they also have power to keep the advancement of man's skills within limits, and protect them from deviation, because when the power of action deviates from the right path it causes destruction.

This explanation shows that beliefs (*Imaniat*) have all those fine qualities together that are found scattered here and there in

other faiths and worldly concepts. Islamic beliefs (*Imaniat*) are free from all those wrong ways of thinking, which are found in other religious and worldly concepts.

The Importance of Belief

This is a brief layout of Islamic civilization. Allegorically, if the Islamic civilization were a building, then it would be a building, which has a deep foundation, strong bricks joined with the best cement; in height it reaches to the skies, and in breadth it spreads from one end to the other end of the world. Despite this height and breadth it does not shake, its walls and pillars are as strong as a rock. The windows and ventilators have been built in such a way that they let in the light, and the fresh air while they block dust, rubbish, polluted wind, and water. All these facilities and the beauty which the building has are because of the belief (*Iman*). It is the belief that strengthens the foundation of the civilization. It picks up the fine construction material and rejects the rubbish and, by baking the raw material, prepares the strong bricks, and raises a durable fortress. It is the belief on which depend the building's elevation, dimensions, and strength. It is the belief that raises this building, spreads and strengthens it, and protects it from external harm and allows all sorts of pure things to enter into it.

In brief, belief (*Iman*) is the soul of Islamic civilization. Without a soul how can it stand in its place; even its existence would not be possible without belief? If it is not stable, it means that its bricks are not strong, its cement is weak and its pillars quake and its elements are not strongly connected to each other. The building of the civilization cannot be expanded nor has it strength to resist external pollution and harmful effects without strong belief.

In a nutshell, absence of belief, in fact, is the absence of Islam; weakness of belief actually is the weakness of Islam; in other words, belief (*Iman*) is the source of power for Islam. Islam is not merely a religion: it is a moral civilization, social system or culture, including politics and all of its aspects.

Belief (*Imàn*) is not merely a religious doctrine. On belief depend the morals of people, and the quality of their character. It is belief that straightens their dealings, and by uniting individuals, creates a nation; the very belief protects their nationality, civilization, the basis of their culture, and their social and political life. Without belief (*Iman*) Islam cannot stand as a religion, civilization, and a political system. The weakness of belief does not mean that just a religious faith has become weak. No; it means that morals and conduct of the Muslim nation as a whole has become lowered. Their character has become weak, their affairs have turned into chaos. Their culture is nothing but a ruin; the unifying force of their nationhood has lost its strength. They are no longer able to live in this world as a strong, free nation.

This is the main reason in Islam that belief has become the criterion to judge the sincerity of a person. Belief is the first condition for a person to enter into the fold of Islam. It is the belief that is presented first to the person who wants to embrace Islam. If he accepts belief (*Iman*), he becomes part of the Muslim nation, and he becomes the equal partner of Muslims in all sections of life, social, cultural, and political as well. All civil and criminal laws will apply to him. On the contrary, if he does not accept belief (*Iman*) he cannot enter into the fold of Islam, none of Islamic law will be applied to him. There will be no way for him to enter into the party of Islam because he is not able to fit into the system of Islam, and he cannot abide by the laws and limits prescribed by Islam.

The position of those who reject the call toward belief (*Iman*) is quite clear; the boundary between rejection and acceptance is so vivid that they are unable to create chaos by entering into the circle of Islam. But those who enter into the fold of Islam by just pretending that they are believers or those who have the canker of doubt in their hearts, or those whose belief is weak, their presence in the rank and file of believers is very dangerous. They do not adopt the Islamic way of life, conduct, and characteristics. Even violating Islamic laws and norms, they create a disruption by their evil deeds within the

Islamic civilization and culture. Through their falsehood, they weaken the roots of Muslim nationality and its political integrity and take part in sedition and commotion that is raised from within or without. The Qur'an calls them hypocrites and points out all those dangers that are imminent by their entrance into the fold of believers. They profess that they are believers; while, in fact, they are not believers. The Qur'an says, "Of the people there are some who say: We believe in Allah and the last day: but they do not really believe" (Al-Baqarah – 2:8).

They talk to Muslims as a Muslim, and to disbeliveers as a disbeliever. The Qur'an says, "When they meet those who believe they say: 'We believe' but when they are alone with their evil ones they say: 'we are really with you, we (were) only jesting' (Al-Baqarah – 2:14).

They ridicule the verses of Allah (SWT) and show their doubt about them. The Qur'an says,

> Already has He sent you in the Book, that when you hear the message of Allah held in defiance and ridicule, you are not to sit with them unless they turn to a different theme: if you did, you would be like them. For Allah will collect the hypocrites and those who defy faith all in Hell. (An-Nisaa – 4:140)

They try to escape from the religious duties. If they fulfil them, they do so only dissemble as to Muslims; otherwise, their hearts have revolted against obedience to God. The Qur'an points out,

> The hypocrites. They seek to deceive Allah but it is Allah Who deceives them. When they stand up to prayer, they perform it without earnestness, to be seen of men, but little they hold Allah in remembrance. (An-Nisaa – 4:142)

> The only reasons why their contributions are not accepted are that they reject Allah and His Messenger: that they come not to prayer but lazily, and they offer contribution unwillingly. (At-Tauba – 9:54)

> Some of the Bedouin Arabs look upon their payments as a fine. (At-Tauba – 9:98)

They declare that they believe in Islam, but they don't abide by the laws of Islam, instead they follow the laws made by disbelievers. The Qur'an mentions these people in these words:

> Have you not turned your thought to those who declare that they believe in the revelations that have come to you and to those before you? Their real wish is to resort together for the judgment (in the disputes) to the evil (taught) though they were ordered to reject him. But Satan's wish is to lead them astray far away (from the right). (An-Nisaa – 4:60)

They commit evil deeds, and they try to pollute the thoughts and deeds of Muslims also. The Qur'an exposes them in there words:

> The hypocrites, men and women are alike: they enjoin evil, and forbid what is just and tighten their purse strings. They have forgotten Allah so He has forgotten them. Verily the hypocrites are rebellious and perverse. (At-Tauba – 9:67)

> They but wish that you should reject faith as they do and thus be on the same footing (as they). (An-Nisaa – 4:89)

They are with the believers as long as they can enjoy a share in the benefits, but as soon as they see that the chances of reaping the benefits have decreased, they leave the believers' camp immediately. The Qur'an describes their thinking and behaviour in these words: And among them are who slander you in the matter of (the distribution of) the alms. If they are given part thereof, they are pleased, but if not. Behold! They are indignant" (At-Tauba – 9:58).

When Islam and Muslims face a serious challenge from their enemies, the hypocrites refuse to fight with them, because they have no love for Islam to sacrifice for it. They do not believe that if they sacrifice, they will get a reward for it. They don't believe in the truthfulness of Islam, so how can they prepare themselves for sacrificing their lives in the cause of Islam. Whenever there is a call to come out and defend Islam in the battlefield, they try to escape from putting their lives in danger, with diverse excuses. Even if the hypocrites do take

part in the battle, they do it unenthusiastically. So their participation in a battle becomes a cause of weakness instead of strength. The Qur'an has mentioned their role, in detail, in various places, in the chapter Al-i-Imran, in the sections 12 and 17, in the chapter An-Nisaa sections 10, 11, 12 and 20, in the chapter At-Tauba sections 7, 11 and 12, in the chapter Al-Ahzab, section 2.

A very dangerous and treacherous characteristic of these hypocrites is that whenever they see that Muslims are in trouble they leave their camp and join the disbelievers' camp, and they work as their spies, providing them with information. If they see Muslims are in trouble, they become happy. By cheating the Muslims, the hypocrites try to get honours and positions from disbelievers. Whatever sedition is raised against Muslims, they take part in it, and try to be ahead of all. They conspire to create enmity and division among the rank and file of the believers.

These characteristics of hypocrites have been discussed in detail in various chapters of the Qur'an, as in Al-i-Imran, An-Nisaa, At-Tauba, Al-Ahzab and Al-Munafiqun.

With this discussion, it can be understood very well that for the establishment of an Islamic system and for its stability the pure belief is an essential requisite. The weakness in belief makes the whole tree of Islam hollow, from its roots to its branches, and from the dangerous effects of such weakness nothing can be kept safe: morals, conduct, social life, culture, civilization, or political system.

Life After Death

If there is one what is its nature? In fact, this question is far from the reach of our knowledge. We do not have those sights with whose help we could peep through the wall of death and see what lies beyond it. We do not have those ears with which we could hear any voice from there. We do not have the apparatus with which we could find out for certain the answer to the question: Is there any such thing or not?

As far as science is concerned, this question is out of its purview. Anybody who says, on the basis of science, that there is no life after death is quite unscientific in his statement. On the basis of science, the answer to this question cannot be given in affirmation or negation. Until we find a means of knowledge that provides information with certainty, science can neither confirm nor deny life after death.

However, the question is whether we can go along with this scientific stance and behaviour in our practical life. Perhaps we cannot, intellectually, it is possible that when we do not have the means to know something, we should refrain from denying or affirming existence. For example, if you don't know any thing about a person, and you don't have to deal with him in any way, then it is not possible for you to form any opinion about his honesty. On the contrary, if you are going to do business with him, then you have to presume that he is honest. You can remain skeptical about whether he is honest, but if you deal with him as a skeptic about his honesty, it is the same as not affirming his honesty, so doubt is a condition that can be found only in your mind. Your action depends on the denying or affirming of a thing.

It needs just a little cogitation. The question of life after death is not a philosophical one; it is deeply related to our practical life. Actually, our moral behaviour totally depends on this question. If I think that there is no life after death, then my practical behaviour will be different. Conversely, if I think that there is life after death, and there I will have to give account of

deeds I have done in this world, and my success or failure depends on the good or evil deeds I performed; then certainly with this concept my moral behaviour will be quite different.

It can be understood by the example of a person who is travelling from New York to California. He thinks that California will be his final destination, and believes that there he will be out of the reach of the police and the Court, he will be free from any accountability or arrest. On the contrary, there is another traveller who understands that his final destination is not California; from there, he knows that he has to cross the ocean and reach another territory. The authorities of that territory have a complete record of his doings in New York and California. They will check it and determine how they should treat him!

It is quite easy to imagine how different their behaviour and conduct will be in each case. The first person will prepare himself for California and the other person will prepare himself for a longer journey. The first person will think that whatever profit and loss he has to face relates to the days passed in New York and believes that once in California, he will be free of consequences. The other person will think that the real and final profit or loss will appear when he reaches his last destination across the ocean. The first person is thinking that he will be free and safe when he reaches his final destination. The other person understands that when he reaches his final destination his record will be checked.

It is obvious that the difference between their conduct and behaviour is the direct result of their concepts about their journey. Exactly, in the same way, our concept about life and death has a decisive effect on our moral life. Whatever step we take in our practical life, its direction will depend on our concept about life after death and the consequences we might face there. If we have the concept that there is life after death, then our steps will take a different direction. On the other hand, if we think that there is no life after death, our steps will be in a different direction.

Through this discussion we come to know that the question of life after death is not a philosophical or intellectual question, it is a question of our practical life. If this is so then we cannot become mired in a quagmire of doubt. Whatever line of action we choose on the basis of doubt will inevitably be chosen on the basis of denial. However we have to answer the question: Is there any life after death or not? If science cannot give the answer to this question then we have to get help from reason and arguments.

What material do we have for reason and its analysis? Before us is man himself and the universe. We should see that whatever man requires is fulfilled completely in this world or remains unfulfilled. To fulfil man's requirements, another type of system is required.

Man has been given a body containing minerals, water, and gases. The universe also has soil, stone, minerals, salts, gases, rivers and oceans. There are laws under which all these things are working. The human body also has to work under these laws. Man needs food for his growth and nourishment. There are trees, plants and grass, and a system, who provides all necessary things that are needed for all growing creatures.

Man is a living creature, who moves with his will, struggles for food, plans to protect himself, and works to preserve his species. There are other living creatures on land and in water, living and flourishing under a system of natural laws which help all of them to continue existing.

In addition, man has another aspect, which distinguishes him from the other creatures, and it is his moral life. He has the sense of good and evil; he has the power and choice of doing both good and evil. His nature demands that results of good and evil deeds should emerge. He has the ability to distinguish between oppression and justice, truth and falsehood, right and wrong, kindness and cruelty. He knows the gratitude and ingratitude, generosity and misery, trustworthiness and treachery. These characteristics are qualities found in his character. They are not merely imaginary. Practically, they deeply affect human culture. Therefore, human nature

insistently demands that actions should see their moral results exactly as all of man's actions give physical results in this material world.

Just take a reflective look at the system of the universe, and find the answer to the question, "is it possible in this universal system for all the moral results of human deeds to materialize?" I assure you it is not possible. We have no knowledge of any creature of this universe that experiences the results of its moral life. The whole system of the universe is working under the physical laws of nature. Moral laws are not seen, in effect, anywhere. Here in this world coins have weight and value but truthfulness has neither weight nor value. Here the seed of the mango produces mangos but he who stands for truth is sometimes showered with flowers; but more often, he is littered with shoes. Here in the world are fixed laws for material things, accordingly, results come out as the laws prescribed, but for moral deeds there is no fixed law under which a predictable outcome could ensue. Because of the dominance of the material laws of nature, sometimes moral results are never manifested, if they do come out, they do it only as far as the material laws of nature permit them.

It happens many times that a moral action demands a particular effect but due to the interference of the material laws of nature the resulting outcome proves totally against the effects of a moral action.

Man has tried, little by little, to establish his own cultural and political system to bring out the results of human actions according to fixed laws, but his attempt is on a very limited scale, and very defective; besides this, man's own shortcomings multiply the defects of his system.

I would like to explain this point with some examples. If one sets another's house on fire, certainly the house will be burned. This is the material or natural result of one's action. The moral result of this action should be a punishment equal to the crime and to the ordeal of the family whose house and belongings were burned. But it depends on the arrest of the arsonist by police, and proving his crime in court, assessment

of the loss of the victim family with perfect accuracy, and awarding of the verdict by the court with specific punishment. If anything is lacking in this procedure, the legal result will not be perfect. After destroying the family, the wrongdoer might live a comfortable life, without suffering any consequences from his act.

Take another example on a larger scale. A few persons become successful in achieving the leading position among their people. The whole nation follows them. Taking advantage of their position, they kindle in their people the passions of nationalism and expansionism, and inflame them with the emotions of hatred and anger, so that then they wage a war against neighbouring countries and millions of people become the fodder of war and millions of people have no choice but to live a life of misery and slavery. The decisions and actions of a small group of people imprint great effects on human history and the evil effects continue to influence the coming generations for centuries.

Do you think that these people who were responsible for all this chaos and destruction get just punishment in this system of the universe? If you could cut them into pieces or burn them, even then the punishment would not be equal to their heinous crime, which has destroyed millions of families and future generations. Under the present system of the universe and the material laws of nature, it is not possible to inflict a punishment on them equal to their crime and its permanent effects.

In the same way, think about those righteous persons who taught human beings the truth and showed them the light of guidance. Innumerable generations of humanity have been benefiting from such teachings, for many centuries. Is it possible to give them the just reward for their great services to this world? Can you imagine a person whose righteous deeds and example influence innumerable men for thousands of years after his death? Can he be given a full reward in this world under the material laws of society?

As I have already explained, the present system of the universe and its physical law does not have the capacity to let

the moral results of human actions come out in full. The other thing is that human actions performed in this short life produce reactions that are continued for such a long time that their full effects and results persist for thousands and millions of years. It is not possible to experience such a long life under the present laws of nature,

From this discussion we conclude that for the biological life of man this physical world and the laws of nature are sufficient and perfect. But for man's moral life they are insufficient, he needs another universe where the governing law should be the law of morality and the material laws of nature should work under it as its helper. Moral man needs a place where life is not short, it should be unlimited; where the moral results which could not take place in this world or whose results were not appropriate should come out in their original form; where righteousness and truth should have weightage and value, instead of gold and silver. It should be a place where fire should burn only those things which are worthy to be burned, according to morality, where the comforts of life should be the lot of those who are righteous and pain should be the lot of those who are wrongdoers and evilmongers. Human nature and reason both demand such a universe and system.

As far as reason and its logic are concerned, they lead us to the judgment: "it should be"; still the question is there. Is there another universe? Both our intellect and knowledge are helpless in giving the answer to this question. Here at this critical point the Qur'an helps us. It says whatever your nature and reason demands will come. One day when the present universe, with its laws, falls apart, another universe with different laws will be created, whose heavens and earth will be different. God will bring to life all men and women, born since the beginning of the world until its end and they will be assembled before their Lord at the same moment. Where the record of every individual, every nation, and all humanity, perfect and pure, without any mistake or omission, will be present, every action of every individual with the reactions will be found in the record. All those generations who have been

affected and have suffered will stand as witnesses. Everything which has the imprint and effect of man's action will speak as a witness, even man's hands, legs, eyes, and tongue will bear evidence against him; then the Lord of the Worlds will give His Judgment regarding reward and punishment. The reward and punishment will be on such a great scale that they cannot be measured with the limited scales of this world. The standards of time and space will be different. Man will get full reward for his good deeds. There will be no death, no illness, and no old age; nothing will disturb his peace, comfort and luxuries. Man will see the consequences of his bad deeds; he will receive full punishment without facing death and unconsciousness.

Those who think that it is not possible for such a life and universe to come into being, pitiable is their narrowness of vision.

If the creation of this universe is possible then why is it not possible for another universe with other laws? The question "Is there life after death?" cannot be answered by reason or by scientific knowledge. The answer requires belief in the unseen.

Introducing Sayyid Maududi

Maulana Maududi, the great Islamic scholar, thinker and leader, was born on September 25, 1903. He gave a new turn to the history of Islamic thought. He, in fact, stands tallest among the prominent Islamic figures of the twentieth century. Because of his contribution to Islamic thinking and practical struggle to make Islam a living reality in modern times, he stands along great Islamic stalwarts like Imam Ghazali, Ibne-Taimiya and Shah Waliullah.

The Maulana spent his childhood at Aurangabad, where he was born in a respectable family of Delhi. His primary education was looked after by his father. He was admitted to eighth class at the age of 11.

He passed Maulvi examination in 1913. Then, his father died and thus he could not continue his studies because he had to share the economic burden of his family. He joined journalism and edited various newspapers; but the period between 1916 and 1921 was very trying for him and he had to live as a poor homeless person in that period.

In 1924 Maulana Ahmad Saeed invited him to take over the editorship of *Al-Jamiat* at Delhi. He worked there till 1928 and made some marvelous contributions in the field of knowledge. Particularly his famous book *Al-Jihad Fil Islam*, which he wrote in this period, attracted the attention of scholarly world of the time.

In 1933 he launched monthly *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an* from Hyderabad, which soon assumed the status of a respectable exponent of Islamic ideology. Maulana started his crusade against false ideologies like materialism, atheism, socialism, progressivism and nationalism. He wrote a number of books exposing the hollowness of these ideologies vis-à-vis the solid Divine ideology of Islam.

In 1937 Allama Iqbal invited him to Lahore and sought his help in the codification of Islamic laws. Thus he went to Lahore but meanwhile Dr. Iqbal passed away. Then, he settled

at Dar-as-Salam, Pathankot. There in 1941, he invited all those who would share his thoughts and agree to launch an organization for Islamic struggle. And thus Jamaat-e-Islami was founded.

In 1947 the country was divided and the Maulana had to migrate to Lahore.

In 1953 the martial law court of Pakistan sentenced him to death for penning down a pamphlet *Qadiani Problem*. But after the global protests and mass agitations the sentence was changed into life imprisonment. Maulana spent 21 months in jail and was released on May 25, 1955. Ayub Khan and other dictators left no stone unturned to tarnish the image of Maulana and destroy his Islamic movement. But God helped him and he continued his historic voyage to achieve the cause of Islamic revival. He completed his masterpiece *Tafheem-ul-Qur'an* in 1972 after 42 years of scholarly labour.

In 1979 King Faisal award for service to Islam was conferred on him. Having laid down the foundation of Islamic movement in Pakistan and several other countries and giving a new hope and aspiration to millions of people in every nook and corner of world, he breathed his last in 1979.●

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